



ONTOLOGICA

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ONTOLOGICA

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A Letter from the Editors of *Ontologica*

A few things have changed since we released the first issue of *Ontologica* last summer, though our general mission continues on as ever. The most drastic change is the loss of our Poetry Editor, David Harrity, who felt it necessary to step down in order to focus more on his family and work life. David did, however, pick out two great poets before leaving, and the issue is much richer for their inclusion. His input will be greatly missed, and we hope he is able to collaborate with us again in the future.

But where we have lost we have also gained: Susane Andracki—an artist featured in Issue 1.1—has come onboard as our new Art Editor. Susane brings much-needed expertise to the task of judging and critically discussing art, as well as a strong feminine presence, filling a gap that otherwise would have remained open in our editorial pool.

We have also changed in terms of size. After receiving comments from several readers who felt overwhelmed by an online publication that exceeded 150 pages, we cut this issue down by a third. Thank you for the suggestions, and please, let us know how we're doing this time around.

Even with these changes much remains the same. Our commitment to bringing forth thoughtful and accessible prose alongside stimulating works of art is as strong as ever. We have some great essays this time around—from an exploration of human memory to an introduction to trans-media fiction, as well as great art, thoughtful poetry, book reviews, and an interview with a fiction writer who's exploring the outer edges of creative freedom in both his work and publishing. With all of this, we're confident you'll find this second issue of *Ontologica* to be as thought-provoking as it is aesthetically pleasing.

The Editors

Rod Dixon

Jesus Isn't an Elephant or an Ass: Thoughts on Politics and Faith

The world's work is to be done. But it doesn't have to be *finished* by us.
We have taken ourselves too seriously. —Thomas Kelly¹

It's become more common to hear Jesus' name linked with this or that political movement. For years in America the conservative² Right has been most closely associated with faith-based political appeals, but the Left has increasingly caught on to the benefits of claiming divine sanction for its own ideology. The popularity of writers like Brian McLaren and *Sojourners* magazine reveals portions of the evangelical community that are hungry for a Left-wing politic. The fact that it was a Democrat who was the values candidate in the previous presidential election proves the Republican Party doesn't hold a monopoly on the religious vote. Like it or not, most Americans style themselves as religious people, and while the duplicity and opportunism of all religious rhetoric in the political arena isn't certain, no one doubts that confessions of faith tug at the heartstrings of a deep and often passionate demographic. While it isn't shocking that some politicians would eagerly coat themselves with a veneer of religiosity, it is

¹ Thomas Kelly (1893-1941), a Quaker who wrote insightfully about the aim and experience of worship.

² The terms "conservative," "liberal," and "progressive" are used in this paper in the political, not the theological, sense.

surprising that the individual all of these elements seek to invoke — Jesus of Nazareth — wasn't in any way political, at least in the sense we use the term.

Four distinct instances illustrate this fact. First, Jesus' famous command to, "Render unto Caesar what is Caesar's, and God what is God's" when confronted with the question of whether it was proper to pay taxes to the Roman government (HCSB, Mark 12:17). Much has been made of Jesus' evasive answer, with people on both liberal and conservative sides of the aisle suggesting that what Jesus meant to support was (insert your own political preferences here), but the Messiah's ambiguity IS the answer. It is left up to the reader to struggle with what precisely belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God because it isn't his concern. After all, this is a man so far off the grid he has no money of his own [suggested] to look at to see whose face is on a Roman coin.

Jesus' transcendence of the political realm is more explicitly stated in John 18:36, when God's anointed representative on earth tells Pontius Pilate that his kingdom is not of this earth, which is precisely why his followers do not behave as the followers of most kingdoms behave. "Not of this Earth" doesn't mean the kingdom of God isn't material, but is a way of saying that it isn't *earthly*. It doesn't look, act, or establish itself in any way the world is used to. Its wisdom is not worldly wisdom, and its power is in sacrifice and surrender. More bluntly: the kingdom isn't business as usual.

Jesus rejects political position outright when the devil, who followed Jesus into the desert to tempt him, offers him power over all the governments in the world (Matt 4:8-10).

Finally, the company Jesus kept is evidence of his ambivalence toward political opinions. One of his disciples, Matthew, was a tax collector. Tax collectors had a vested interest in keeping the status quo. They were collaborators with the Roman government whose livelihood depended on Roman rule. They were as Right-wing as you could get. On the other hand, his disciple Simon was a zealot. Zealots were Left-wing revolutionaries whose main objective was casting off Roman rule and reestablishing a sovereign Israel. The fact that Jesus chose both men to be disciples ought to tell us how concerned the Son of God was with political affiliation.

Jesus didn't come peddling a platform. He didn't hand out stickers or put up yard signs³. His message was much more prophetic and apocalyptic in nature. "Good news!" Jesus announces. The true king of this world is on his way, and we have the choice to be with or against Him.

As they were listening to this, He went on to tell a parable because He was near Jerusalem, and they thought the kingdom of God was going to appear right away. Therefore He said: "A nobleman traveled to a far country to receive for himself authority to be king and then return. He called 10 of his slaves, gave them 10 minas, and told them, 'Engage in business until I come back.'

"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We don't want this man to rule over us!'

"At his return, having received the authority to be king, he summoned those slaves he had given the money to so he could find out how much they had made in business. The first came forward and said, 'Master, your mina has earned 10 more minas.'

"'Well done, good slave!' he told him. 'Because you have been faithful in a very small matter, have authority over 10 towns.'

"The second came and said, 'Master, your mina has made five minas.'

"So he said to him, 'You will be over five towns.'

"And another came and said, 'Master, here is your mina. I have kept it hidden away in a cloth because I was afraid of you, for you're a tough man: you collect what you didn't deposit and reap what you didn't sow.'

³ Though it's conceivable that he kissed babies.

"He told him, 'I will judge you by what you have said, you evil slave! [If] you knew I was a tough man, collecting what I didn't deposit and reaping what I didn't sow, why didn't you put my money in the bank? And when I returned, I would have collected it with interest!' So he said to those standing there, 'Take the mina away from him and give it to the one who has 10 minas.'

"But they said to him, 'Master, he has 10 minas.'

"I tell you, that to everyone who has, more will be given; and from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away. But bring here these enemies of mine, who did not want me to rule over them, and slaughter them in my presence.'" (Luke 19:11-27)

THE PROBLEM ON THE RIGHT

In a general sense⁴, conservative political thought emphasizes the responsibility of the individual, while often failing to recognize the real and lasting power of corrupt systems. The "nanny state" is in many ways the conservative's primary foe: a government that rewards the incompetence and laziness of others by taking from the responsible and productive members of society. While certainly some conservatives would put that in far more nuanced terms, many voices on the Right seem unwilling to acknowledge that an individual's economic position is often more the product of forces beyond their control than personal work ethic. Children born in economically prosperous families have a leg up over their working-class counterparts. They go to better schools; have more opportunities presented to them. Their parents and their educators are more likely to prepare them for success in life because their parents are present, as opposed to having to work a second job, and their teachers have less behavioral problems to contend with than they would in a lower-class school district. Anyone who has had an incompetent boss can testify that companies don't always hire management based entirely on skill, just as anyone who has ever been a part of the hiring process knows

⁴ In both my picture of the Right and Left I'm painting with dangerously broad strokes. I'll leave it up to the reader to decide if I've been fair to either side of the spectrum.

that employees aren't always hired solely on their ability to get the job done. Contrary to the opinion of some conservatives, gumption and can-do attitude don't overcome every source of adversity, not everyone who succeeds or fails deserves their lot, and the random circumstances of our birth can just as easily lift us up as they can hold us in place. A failure to recognize this makes it hard to take some of the most consistent themes in the Bible seriously: that God's heart and love is first and foremost with the poor, the oppressed, and the marginalized, and that it is our responsibility as followers of the one God to care for his less fortunate children.

Conservative distrust of big government often instills an almost religious faith in the free market and its self-regulative capabilities. This faith would perhaps be well placed if all companies were capable of adhering to a strict over-the-horizon vision, but current crises in financial and energy institutions have shown how short-term gains in profit and stockholder confidence take precedence over long-term sustainability.

Paradoxically, the conservative distrust of centralized power rarely translates into a distrust of military might. Even more paradoxically, conservative followers of the Christ—who preached love for one's enemies—are the demographic most likely to support torture (Gilgoff) and have been some of the most consistent supporters of current U.S. wars (Marsh). One of which clearly fails the Church's long-standing Just War criteria.

Finally, the religious conservative vision is based on a blatant fiction: that America was once a Christian nation and can be so again. To which golden age of Christlike values should we return? When we tricked and slaughtered the Indians out of

their land? When the workhorse of our economy was slave labor? Perhaps I look too far back. How about the 1920s through the 50s? Back when gays stayed in the closet out of fear for their physical safety, and blacks and women still largely “knew their place.”

THE PROBLEM ON THE LEFT

If the Right fails to take systematic oppression seriously enough, then the Left often gives systematic solutions far too much credit. Vast government programs can do good in the world, but the more power you concentrate in one area, the higher the risk that power center can and will be manipulated. As unpopular as it is to say — and as much pain as it personally causes me to admit — progressive politics and fascism, in places, share a similar philosophical foundation⁵. Consider these six points taken from the former National Socialist Party of Germany’s 25-point Program.

- All citizens must have equal rights and obligations.
- Abolition of unearned (work and labor) incomes. Breaking of debt (interest)-slavery.
- In consideration of the monstrous sacrifice in property and blood that each war demands of the people, personal enrichment through a war must be designated as a crime against the people. Therefore we demand the total confiscation of all war profits.
- We demand a division of profits of all heavy industries.
- We demand an expansion on a large scale of old age welfare.
- The state is to be responsible for a fundamental reconstruction of our whole national education program, to enable every capable and industrious German to obtain higher education and subsequently introduction into leading positions. The plans of instruction of all educational institutions are to conform with the experiences of practical life. The comprehension of the concept of the State must be striven for by the school [Staatsbuergerkunde] as early as the beginning of understanding. We demand the education at the expense of the State of outstanding intellectually gifted children of poor parents without consideration of position or profession.

⁵ Fascism shares a lot with the Right as well, which is equally clear in these points of National Socialism. It’s an amalgam too complicated to accurately place on a one-dimensional graph.

Nazi Germany had an extensive public works program: they built public roads, made commodities like automobiles affordable⁶, built public swimming pools and parks. That isn't to say that any of these positions and policies are bad—I personally agree with parts of almost all of them—rather, the point is that a people can have noble ideals and still achieve and selectively apply them in ways that are truly monstrous. You can be a vegetarian, a lover of opera and the arts, a supporter of public works, and still be demonic in nature⁷. The horror of Nazi Germany wasn't that its leaders were morally grotesque fanatics, but that the engine behind it was a mundane bureaucracy. The people who did the real work of the Third Reich were everyday, middle class, and thoroughly ordinary. For example, Heinrich Himmler, the supervisor of Germany's Final Solution, wasn't an evil genius or a mad scientist, but a chicken farmer. Sprawling institutions, by nature of their size and top-down command structures, relieve individual members of the machine of any sense of moral responsibility for the institution's evils. Average people are thus able to have a hand in injustices they would otherwise repudiate because, as they will tell you, they are not the ones at the wheel. This is as true for Nazi underlings as it is for investment bankers.

Oddly, the power of a system is as binding on those at the top as it is on those at the bottom. Idealists new to positions of authority are often shocked to discover that the expectations of their power base — consumers, stockholders, voters — and the ethics of their competitors—how cut-throat or opportunistic they are—greatly limits and determines their ability to make radical change while also running a successful

⁶ *Volkswagen* means “the people’s car.” It was Hitler’s idea—an affordable and dependable car for the German masses.

⁷ Hitler was all these things.

enterprise⁸. The company president, like the queen bee, is simultaneously ruler and slave.

Liberal commitments to personal freedom and big-picture solutions can result in a disregard for personal evil, which leads to an understanding of the Christ that is just as distorted as the conservative one. Yes, he was loving, but it wasn't like he couldn't be critical, or even angry. Jesus did not have an "It's all good" attitude to personal ethics. Though I don't question the faith of anyone who is politically pro-choice rather than pro-life, I *do* question the honesty of anyone who claims that the historical Jesus would have been anything other than appalled and grieved by abortions of convenience. A man who insisted his followers must be willing to lay down their lives in order to serve him, and to put others before themselves, wouldn't give a shit⁹ about a person's "right" to escape the consequences of their actions.

But, and this is crucial, it's equally dishonest to imagine that his solution would be to scream hate at people on their way into a clinic or to exclude them from fellowship.

And while the Left's commitment to the poor isn't in question, it is unclear if the far Left is capable of recognizing the thin line between providing the poor with economic aid, and making them dependent on a state-run welfare system. The Right isn't out of line when it points out that some economic disparity is the result of bad

⁸ Though it must be remembered that the world's definition of success and the kingdom's often differ greatly.

⁹ I use that word consciously, in order to quote the Baptist preacher, Tony Campolo. "I have three things I'd like to say today. First, while you were sleeping last night, 30,000 kids died of starvation or diseases related to malnutrition. Second, most of you don't give a shit. What's worse is that you're more upset with the fact that I said shit than the fact that 30,000 kids died last night."

What's amazing about the Left is that, while most would cheer the statement above, you would get icy indignation were "starved" replaced with "aborted."

decision-making and irresponsibility. There are also plenty of people who are more than willing to take advantage of the charity and tax dollars of hard-working citizens. Along with that, it bears mentioning that government institutions have historically been far better at finding ways to expand and justify their existence than solving the problems they were created to work out.

AN UNCLEAR DIVIDE

Separating faith and politics is messy business. A traditional Anabaptist position is to deny Christians any place in government or the political process. An earlier version of this paper actually leaned in that direction, but seemed overzealous upon review. The Spirit moves us all in different ways and in different directions. To say the Spirit couldn't move a believer into political service seems blasphemous. This is real blasphemy: not making jokes about religion on TV, but denying the good work of the Spirit in our present reality.

The opposite end of the spectrum — identifying our faith with a particular political entity so thoroughly that is difficult to separate the two—is no better. Has the Christian Right's marriage to the Republican Party achieved any of the goals such a union was supposed to make possible — abortion seems alive and well — or have they only become a voting group Republicans know they have in their pocket? If the latter, why do Left-leaning Christians think they'll fare any better in a marriage with the Democratic Party?

What we ought to labor toward is better distinguishing our political sensibilities from the commands and expectations of our faith. Existence is far too complicated for

either Republican or Democratic narratives to capture adequately, and it's time we recognized that our allegiance to Christ Jesus doesn't give us special access to political wisdom. Those who feel called should work within or in tandem with governments to fight injustice, protect creation, and improve the lot of the world. But these endeavors should always be carried out in humility, never losing sight that it is ultimately through merciful love—not power or victory—that we are commanded to be the salt of the earth. Our task is to be the world's light, not its moral police.

In this truth let's cast off notions that there is one party believers can identify with as Christians. Let's stop using God's name to sanctify our opinions, and stop demonizing any brother or sister that disagrees with them. Just because a person is opposed to nationalized healthcare doesn't mean they don't care about the poor, and it certainly doesn't mean they're not a part of the body of Christ¹⁰. There is truth in the conservative Christian claim that it isn't necessarily the government's responsibility to take care of the poor and dispossessed. To some extent they're right. It isn't the government's responsibility—it's the Church's. However, if the Church fails to take care of the poor—and it is failing—how dare we feign surprise when people call on the government to fill the void?

If there is truly no male or female, no Jew or pagan in Christ, then there is no Progressive, Tea Partier, or Socialist either. No universally applicable political theory exists, religious-based or otherwise; different cultures, locations, and situations call for different political answers. Should we engage with reality in the manner we think best?

¹⁰ I was guilty of making just that sort of accusation myself in the heat of the healthcare debate, I'm ashamed to say. It was stupid and self-righteous and this paper is, partially, a self-correction.

Absolutely, but let's not forget that the final political solution we yearn for transcends anything our imaginations can dream up, and that our allegiance isn't to any idea or party, but to a person who we as the faithful manifest in various ways within the physical world. The metaphor of the *body* of Christ is crucial. We mustn't lose sight of it, and we desperately need to think it through more fully, because it suggests that our strength is precisely in our diversity, not in pretenses of conformity.

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Mary to her Son X

It is not so awful
 to be ordinary,
 to count the worth of your days
 in the height of the dustpile
 that grows in the corner
 of a carpenter's life.
 Leave God's work to God
 and his pigeons who coo peace
 to bladed men,
 who create meaning from staves
 abandoned on roadsides
 by lazy prophets.
 See the bright stigmata
 bought by simple splinters,
 the price of building the trappings of life,
 marks birthed
 from carving new cradles,
 from buffing the dents of age
 from rocking chairs.
 Your hands, too,
 are instruments of God.
 They are no less worthy of grace,
 they are no less able
 to coax faith from wood
 for not being your brother's.

Josh Smith

Gears in Motion

Josh Smith isn't your typical artist. In fact he doesn't believe he is an artist, though others would contradict his notion that he is merely a humble tinkerer. But I remember back to the year 2000, when I first saw his work, and his creations were like nothing I had witnessed at the time. Josh would use found objects, bits of cloth and metal to create truly unique worn pieces. His early pieces took on the style of what is known today as "Steampunk". Today Josh creates pieces that echo his life journey.—SA



UNTITLED —JOSH SMITH 2000

Susane Andracki: How did you get into the creation of art pieces?

Josh Smith: Since childhood, tinkering, building and inventing things has always been part of my life, which is probably why I still don't consider anything I make art. They are more like inventions. Possessing no formal training or education with tools, typical art implements, or philosophy, it took chance to help me to bump into the right mediums. From there, it was just a lot of experimentation to learn to work with each.

Leather craft came first. It found me through a merit badge in Boy Scouts. The simple colors, versatility of the material and its finished appearance, especially with rivets, snaps, buckles and other small mechanisms, made it a favorite.



WHITE MASK — JOSH SMITH 2009

The rest of it seems to come from a personal fascination with clockwork, mechanical objects, and mid- to late nineteenth and early twentieth-century antiques and architecture.

SA: What is your art background? I understand you are also a photographer and chainmail artist amongst other creative avenues.

JS: I don't have any actual, formal education or training in traditional art. The only medium that I ever had any true classroom time with was journalistic black-and-white

photography. Though fascinating, and vaguely artistic at times, the necessary style and function of it often precluded personal creativity.

Everything else — leather, wire and paper — was a gift of knowledge or inspiration from someone else. Though, admittedly, on rare occasions when people call me an "artist", it makes me blink. I just build things. When something catches my mind's eye or sparks my imagination, I try to sketch out a way to make it physical — cogs, gears, mechanisms, and all. And, if I figure that part out, it eventually becomes an excuse to learn, tinker, and tweak until it becomes a physical, functional object.



CLAW SETS — JOSH SMITH 2009

SA: What are your inspirations for creation?

JS: Inspirations often come from the mechanical, industrial and the mid- to late 20th and later 19th century: ornate, yet functional, beautiful but diabolically conceived, and

even subtly dangerous, depending on the object. Clockwork mechanisms and gear-driven machinery are a constant fascination. The elegance of gears, cogs, and springs working in harmony to create any function is beautiful. It creeps into my designs and seems to blend with an element of fantasy: the simple and functional, but somehow impossible.

SA: What is your philosophy or credo as an artisan?

Josh Smith: Dream it, then build it. If something inspires you, learn about it, study it, then make it real. Don't ever let your imagination or inspiration be limited by philosophy, perception, or reality. If it exists in your heart, mind, and imagination, and only increases the world's beauty, find a way to make it live.



EMBER CLAW — JOSH SMITH 2009

SA: How do you define yourself as an artist? Your early styles indicate you are the original Steampunk artisan.

JS: I'm definitely not an artist. If anything, I'm more of an amateur tinkerer or inventor looking to build the mechanical, beautiful, and impossible. It's always been about making the impossible that much more possible or building the what-could-have-been.

SA: Why is your art and its creation important to you?

JS: Building things is something of a release. It lets me slip away from reality for a bit, and, if I'm lucky, bring something back from a far-away place to share with others.

SA: What message do you have for our readers or future artisans?

JS: If you dare to dream, dare to build. Then dare yourself to do it again.

Susanna Childress

Waiting for Benjamin

I.

The first thing you see this morning is how
 your slippers lie on the floor, turned toward each other,
 heels out. You don't remember being in a hurry

 to sleep. Your feet nudge back into the slippers
 as though they are familiar, the flesh and the furry cover,
 one wearing, one being worn. This morning

 you have the urge to scramble eggs, but first the house
 must be opened, as though each porthole will bless the shine
 of hours, procure it: the day is a white sheet, flapping

 against the walls. Perhaps it is the inverse of settling
 your body last night, walking alone to bed, freeing yourself
 of clothes, dropping into sleep. The doors and windows

 waver in their upright positions, the wind pressures
 the rooms to talk; the wood and glass obediently titter.
 A fly wanders past at the breakfast table

 and dried grass moves slowly across the panels
 of the floor. If you didn't live alone you might feel bad
 for allowing the outside in, you might write notes

 to yourself, *Buy screen door* or *Sweep front room*.

As it is, you are comforted by the attention.
It's as though you're being visited.

II.

It's moments like this, when the pockets of your grapefruit
are emptied, spoonful by spoonful, when there is only
a taste left in your mouth of the soft, sour beads

you rolled over your tongue, separated, split open
with your front teeth, this is when you must
begin to move. In those moments, when there's nothing left

to eat or put away, you are a joke to yourself. A portion
may tell you it's time to jog, start a load of laundry,
buy an ink cartridge for the printer, but there is

a stronger part of you, one that will take a blanket
out to the front yard, a blanket and a collection
of essays, a blanket and a book and a bottle

of lemon-sweetened water, and let you sit. You know
the real reason for going into the front yard. You will do
your best to look detached from the perfection

of the day, sipping the liquid, penning a note
in the margins: *Faustian reference?* Or *Look up 'totemic'*
or just *Nice*. Even then, barring some untapped

nonchalance, you will perk when the tires of the mailman,
the Knippas next door, the Acevedos two doors down

slow into a driveway, you will flinch

with every car passing at full speed, you will be
continually distracted by the dew still in perfect droplets
in the palm of a green weed patch you've been meaning

to mow. Those tiny white hairs, how they
keep the spheres perched so that even
your fingernail does not burst them.

III.

By noon, you want to think about him. You pick
details you've not thought about yet: how he won't eat
the white near strawberry stems, never rolls his eyes,

thinks his hands are too large. He said once
his kisses were not goodbyes, just bookmarks. And once,
just one time, when he was frustrated, when you

were pulling away, he said he loved you. It's getting windier:
the blanket curls around your calf, the pages of the book
flip forward, the hair behind your ear falls. You start to wonder if

he's not coming. Inside the house, when you reach
into a bowl of garlic, it feels like knuckles. When you pull
the damp pulp from between its white layers,

you begin to imagine how the feet must leave
the slippers. Each foot stops and pulls out slowly. Or
each foot, mid-air, gives a little kick. Both feet agree.

And the slippers lie still where the feet have left them,
where the feet will rejoin them. Heels out. They don't mind
the night. You begin to think you weren't in a hurry

to sleep last night. You were just unable to watch the dark
fall into the house any longer, around the blinds,
under the door. The dogs in the neighborhood had quieted.

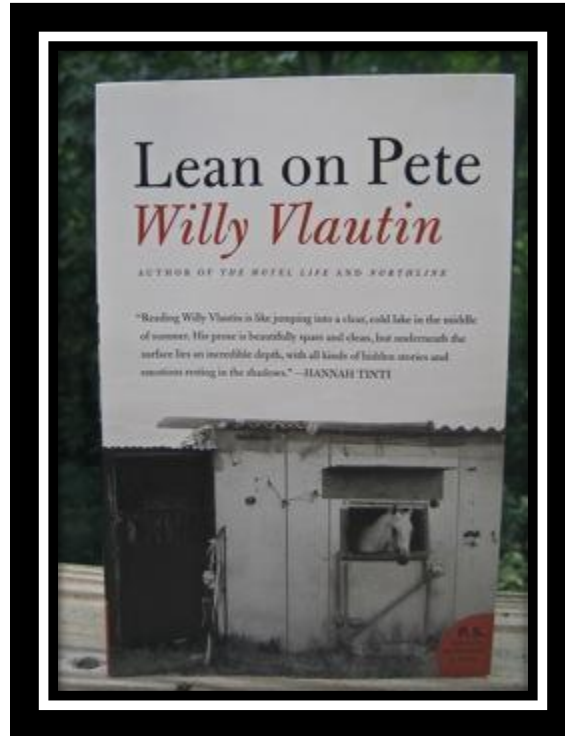
The phone had rung once: he said he'd come by, mid-morning,
bring the last of the things you'd lent him, CDs, books,
the watch you left almost a month ago, when you spent

seven hours learning, again, to kiss. A month
ago, before you told him it would never work,
before you knew the full weight of your solitude

like an untidy set of armor. Outside, a car slows
and stops. The windchimes gossip. The door
to your mailbox grates back into place.

Kilean Kennedy

***Lean On Pete* by Willy Vlautin: A Book Review**



Melodrama has, among other things, the odious trait of taking what could otherwise be a fine piece of fiction and wrecking it within a few pages, or even sentences. And it's not always a characteristic solely relegated to books sporting muscle-bound Lotharios on their covers. It can be found in romances or thrillers or almost anything remotely classifiable, including literary fiction. Easy categorizations aside, it typically occurs whenever an author is going for a calculated reaction from readers, mainly by exaggerating specific "crucial" moments in an attempt to amplify what is most often a patently mundane setup. Willy Vlautin, the author of *Lean On Pete*, his third novel, is much too relentless an artist to succumb to this kind of behavior — even though when it comes to his own characters Vlautin has an almost pathological

knack for placing them dead center in the middle of squalid circumstances; i.e. situations that could be milked for easy, unearned emotional payoffs. This is not to say Vlautin's style isn't friendly or accessible, because it is: his sentences are taut and clean, the chapters are short, and this book can be read in only a couple of sittings, if not one.

Lean On Pete is told in the voice of 15-year-old Charley Thompson, a kid with little to no parental supervision, forced to continuously fend for himself in a lower-class world populated with scary people. When the novel begins, Charley's father has just moved the two of them to Portland, Oregon, to escape some bad dealings in another town. Charley's father isn't abusive or mean but he's also not around much and doesn't seem to mind leaving Charley alone for long stretches of time. To keep himself fed, Charley eventually nabs a job at the local track, working for a soured old horse owner named Del, a man known for racing his animals beyond any reasonable threshold, or until they have to be destroyed. The namesake of the book is one of Del's horses and the one with which Charley forms a connection. Numerous people tell Charley from the outset not to develop any kind of an attachment to the horses, especially an old racehorse like Pete, but it's a statement he ignores and a sentiment that gains resonance as the novel progresses. Although Charley's love for Pete sends both of them out on a harrowing trip and serves as a propellant for the latter half of the book, it also represents Charley's life. He's unable to keep from caring deeply about Pete, showing him the kind of genuine attention Charley's rarely experienced himself. In one of the novel's most representative passages, Charley begins talking to Pete, the pair walking along the roadside in the desert. Because they have nowhere to go, Charley starts

telling Pete about a football teammate from his old town, thinking about this rare friend's sisters and mother, their decency toward him and how they once made him feel welcome:

It was the nicest place I'd ever been. I told Pete how I almost called them one night a few weeks back, but that I didn't want to beg them for anything or have his sisters know that I was living like I was. If they ever thought of me I'd rather have them think of me as alright. I'd rather never see them again than let them see me the way I was.

To say bad things happen to Charley and Pete isn't giving too much away. It's also a stupefying understatement. This is not a sunny book, and in lesser hands this entire work would crumble under the weight of Charley's hardships. But Vlautin is too good a writer and storyteller for this to happen.

In addition to writing, readers might be interested to know Vlautin is also a successful musician, serving as the lead songwriter and frontman for the band Richmond Fontaine. The band has established a loyal fanbase over the last several years, specializing in a tuneful style of alt-country Americana, and his career as a tunesmith is bound to have given Vlautin a chance to travel a great deal and see a lot of things most people have never experienced. One of the strongest traits of his band's music is the songwriting, courtesy of Vlautin (the title of their latest album is *We Used To Think The Freeway Sounded Like A River*). And speaking of traits, there is in fact the strong whiff of one to be found in the pages of *Lean On Pete*. It's called truth.

Scott Walker

Building Collaborative Commercial Entertainment Property or, Stitching the Exquisite Corpse with Transmedial Thread

The writer worked relentlessly, slaving away in creative isolation. Stolen hours in the stillness of the early morning and the dark of night, filled with the lonely toils of one devoted to courting her muse. Months slipped by, seasons passed. Eventually, the writer emerged, blinking, into the light of day with her latest offering: a gem perfectly chiseled and polished with the satisfying but equally frustrating process of solitary artistry.

This mythic view of the creative process is not entirely incorrect, but it's giving way to something in direct contradiction to the traditional perspective that the creative process is a solitary one. Content creators have traditionally worked alone or in small groups, within a single medium, and have expected audiences to simply consume their content without "messing with it." Content distributors have enjoyed, until recently, near monopolistic control over distribution channels. And content owners have benefited from the economic challenges facing anyone wanting to pirate analog (non-digital) content.

Advances in technology and consumer behavior are chipping away at this long-standing arrangement between creators and consumers, eroding the control content

creators have over how their works are consumed. Technology allows for new kinds of content to be experienced in an increasing number of ways. Consumers are eagerly reaching for the newest tools that allow them to remix, remash, and recontextualize others' content, oblivious or willfully ignorant of whether their derivative works qualify as copyright infringement (fair use notwithstanding).

Many creatives have responded by attempting to apply the content rules that worked so well in the analog world to the digital world: digital rights management to wall off/lock down content or its functionality; proprietary distribution channels/platforms; and legal action. The results have been mixed at best.

But a growing number of creatives are learning that embracing the digital realm can have its own advantages. What's emerging from the current digital dust-up is a new approach that takes advantage of the economics of digital content, the advances of technology, and the growing interest of content consumers to become content producers, if not collaborators.

At the risk of over-simplification, these trends can be viewed as:

- new legal licensing frameworks
- an increased interest in collaborative narration
- the rise of transmedia storytelling¹¹

¹¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transmedia_storytelling. Transmedia storytelling is generally used to refer to the act of distributing multiple stories across multiple mediums within a common, shared world. Transmedia storytelling is not simply the adapting or porting of a story from one medium to another, as in the movie adaptations of the Harry Potter books. Rather, each creative work in a transmedial property brings new stories and/or characters to the property/world. *Battlestar Galactica's* webisodes used both new and existing characters from the TV show to introduce new storylines within the BG universe, for instance.

Please note that while this term is popular in the U.S. (witness the Producers Guild of America's decision in April 2010 to take the rare step of approving a new credit — "Transmedia Producer" — most other countries tend to use the term cross-media or 360°(?) storytelling. There is growing agreement over generalities, but there is still no consensus about either the terms or the subtle nuances attributed to them.

Consider the following:

- I. *The Mongoliad* – a collaborative and participatory new fictional property headed by Neal Stephenson and described as, “a series of linked stories written by different writers, a Wikipedia-style concordance, and ‘an ongoing stream of nontextual, para-narrative, and extra-narrative stuff which we think brings the story to life in ways that are pleasingly unique, and which can’t be done in any single medium.’”¹² Readers will also be encouraged to participate in the creation of canonical material. (As of this writing, the launch date has not yet been announced.)
- II. *Redeus* – “a new fictional world that will come to life on the Internet as a subscription-based site that will offer, for starters, three serialized stories set in a shared world.”¹³ This shared world was created jointly by Steven Savile, Bob Greenberger, and Aaron Rosenberg and will include content across multiple mediums. (Scheduled to launch July 1, 2010.)
- III. Jim Butcher¹⁴, Mercedes Lackey¹⁵ – recently allowed for fan fiction of their works to be published under a Creative Commons license¹⁶ that allows for remixing of their original work and copying/distribution of derivative works (commercial rights to derivative fan fiction are not allowed, however).
- IV. *Runes of Gallidon* – a “living fantasy world designed for creative collaboration in an online community.”¹⁷ Licensed under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license, this shared world of content rewards fans who create quality content with the rights to commercially sell their derivative works (and share in revenue if their derivative work is sold/licensed by Brain Candy, LLC (BCL), the company that owns the *Runes of Gallidon* property). (Officially launched in July of 2009; disclosure: I own Brain Candy, LLC.)

The traditional models of content creation/distribution thrive on control driven by economic barriers and artificial scarcities (production costs, access to distribution

¹² <http://www.boingboing.net/2010/05/25/neal-stephenson-greg.html>

¹³ <http://www.comicmix.com/news/2010/04/10/redeus-brings-the-gods-all-of-them-home/>

¹⁴ <http://www.jim-butcher.com/news/000354.php>

¹⁵ <http://www.mercedeslackey.com/news.html>

¹⁶ <http://creativecommons.org> “Creative Commons is a nonprofit corporation dedicated to making it easier for people to share and build upon the work of others, consistent with the rules of copyright. We provide free licenses and other legal tools to mark creative work with the freedom the creator wants it to carry, so others can share, remix, use commercially, or any combination thereof.”

¹⁷ <http://runesofgallidon.com>

channels, marketing reach, etc). This was somewhat easy to achieve before the Internet, since it costs money to create pirated physical copies of content and move them around for distribution/sale.

With digital content, those economic barriers to copying and distribution no longer apply. The new models of content creation/distribution are quick to take advantage of the cratering cost of content production and the relatively free, global copy machine that is the Internet. Further, the creative barriers are being transformed into bridges, allowing audiences to participate canonically and monetarily in the collaborative creation of official content in entertainment properties.

What happens when creatives stop suing their customers and start inviting audiences to be part of the creative process? The answers are far from clear, but the general direction for a lot of content is one where creators are growing more comfortable with the idea that attempting to control the distribution and consumption of digital content by limiting access or issuing lawsuits is neither realistic nor even necessarily desirable in all cases.

Inviting others to come play in your creative sandbox is increasingly appealing. Layer in the new distribution channels and platforms constantly being thrown into the mix, and it's never been a better time to be a lone creative (witness the iPad as a new platform and the DIY publishing option recently announced by Apple for the iBooks store)¹⁸.

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http://www.maclife.com/article/news/apple_reveals_new_service_authors_sell_their_books_directly_ibookstore

And as technologies emerge that allow us to consume content in new ways (e.g., you can now read comics on your computer, smartphone, or iPad) and give consumers new ways to interact with and participate in content creation (e.g., vote for your favorite American Idol contestant, tweet about your *LOST* finale as you watch it live on TV, etc.), it's natural that the rise in transmedia storytelling would happen along with the increased interest in creative collaboration.

More content in more mediums available through more distribution channels on more platforms equals more ways for audiences to interact with content.

But what does all of this mean from a creative, narrative, and legal standpoint? What are the risks and rewards for allowing others to bring their toys into your creative sandbox? What are the challenges of constructing a collaborative framework that maximizes fan participation but minimizes intellectual property owners' exposure to commercial and legal risks? Is there a viable commercial space between traditional entertainment content creation ("I own everything, and you can do nothing with it") and an intellectual property free-for-all ("You can do whatever you want with it")?

I propose that there is, and the collaborative possibilities that exist in this space arise from a process of co-creating value where legal frameworks and narrative structures are constructed to maximize collaborative creativity and minimize loss of commercial control. I call this concept "collaborative commercial entertainment," and I believed in the concept enough to fund BCL in 2008 to explore the possibilities of this new model. BCL's first internally developed shared world is *Runes of Gallidon*, and it

was built using the collaborative commercial entertainment property model (albeit an extreme version of it).

Collaborative commercial entertainment:

- endorses and legitimizes what is already happening (fan-based remixing of copyrighted material);
- builds bridges between official content (canon) and user-generated content (fanon) so that value can be co-created between property owners and audiences; and
- allows fans to share in the attribution and (potentially) monetary rewards of their derivative works

This model upends the traditional approach to commercial entertainment, but it is not meant to replace the way all entertainment is produced. It is an alternative, though one that makes increasingly more sense in the expanding digital landscape.

And while transmedia storytelling is not required for collaborative commercial entertainment properties, it certainly makes sense to give audiences multiple ways to participate in and contribute to the property. What follows is an overview of the considerations for creating a collaborative entertainment property that is transmedial in nature and intended to be an ongoing narrative (vs. a single novel, movie, video game, etc.).

I'm going to use *Runes of Gallidon* as a starting point for two reasons. First, it's an extreme version of the collaborative model, making it easier to see the differences between traditional and collaborative entertainment. Second, I know this model very well and understand all of the aspects involved in the development and launch of *Runes of Gallidon*; I don't have the same level of behind-the-scenes information on other properties.

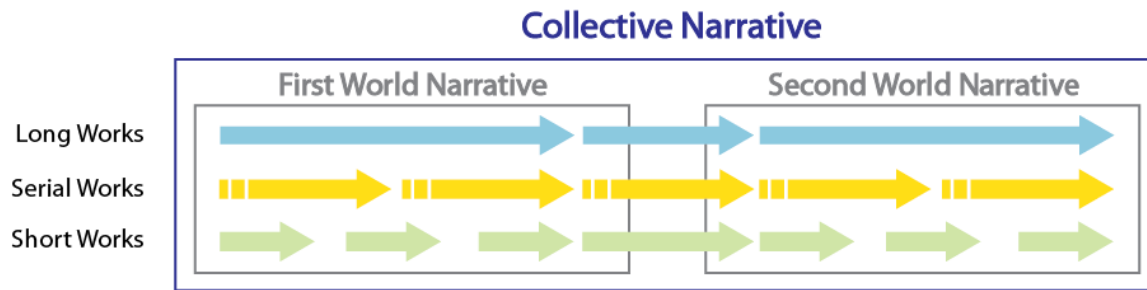
BCL is still experimenting with the collaborative commercial entertainment model, and it pushed the envelope in all directions for *Runes of Gallidon*. In a sense, it was a stress-test for the collaborative model to find its weaknesses. While it's too early to say whether the *Runes of Gallidon* implementation of the collaborative model is viable, it's clear that the execution of the *Runes of Gallidon* property was not entirely a success. BCL has made some mistakes, tried to learn from them, and is addressing them later this year.

Area	Structure			
	Restrictive (traditional)	~	Permissive (collaborative)	
Narrative	Monomedial	~	Multimedia	~ Transmedial
Creative	No UGC Canon	~	Filtered UGC Canon	~ No Canonical Restrictions
Legal	No UGC Ownership/Revenue	~	UGC Ownership/Commercial Rights	

There are three main areas of consideration for commercial collaborative entertainment properties:

- Narrative (mediums, stories, etc.)
- Creative (conditions for collaboration)
- Legal (ownership, commercial rights, licensing, etc.)

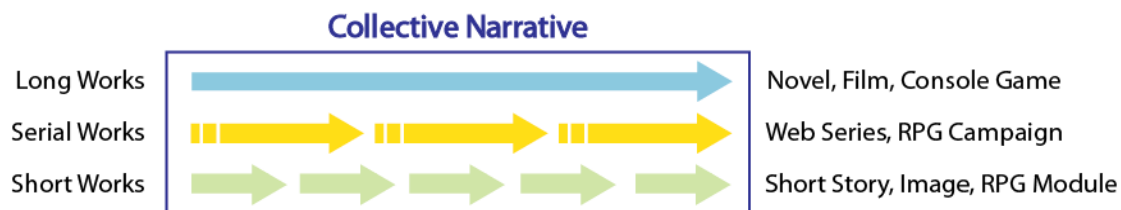
There are many options within each area, resulting in countless ways of structuring a collaborative entertainment property. This flexibility means property owners can create a structure that supports their individual goals and needs.



CONSTRUCTING THE SHARED WORLD (NARRATIVE)

The traditional story has, for a few millennia now, been driven by the Aristotelian approach to plot (having as its current incarnation the three-act structure). The most important aspect of this structure isn't how many acts/parts it has but the fact that it has an end, a conclusion, and a finale.

This has served us well for many a century, but as the advent of transmedia storytelling begins to place more content in a world-of-stories basis vs. a single-story-only basis, it's necessary to avoid making the end of one story trigger the end of the world narrative. Further, individual stories within the property need to be told in the mediums best suited for the stories. This will result in a collection of content, with stories distributed across a variety of mediums. For the sake of simplicity, let's refer to all content within a shared world (i.e. a single property) as the "collective narrative."



A collaborative property may be launched with a single work and have subsequent works across other mediums, or it can launch initially with multiple stories

across multiple mediums, such as the *Low Lifes* project¹⁹. For the property to have an extended shelf life, the collective narrative has to be carefully managed to provide conclusions at the individual story level but provide a sense of ongoing narrative at the world level.

Developing multiple, overlapping world narratives is a time-honored tradition in television shows, where long arcs (say, the *X-Files* mythology storylines) are integrated into smaller, stand-alone tales (the *X-Files* monster-of-the-week storyline). World narratives provide the ongoing arcs that tie together the other stories in the collective narrative, just as they are also supported by the other stories. And world narratives can arc as well, providing a sense of closure to one narrative even as a new one is being introduced. This approach supports an ongoing world engagement with audiences while still providing narrative finality at the story level.

In retrospect, the biggest mistake BCL made when it launched *Runes of Gallidon* was not having a large work in place for audiences to step into. BCL had a mythology, a world map, a current summary of the cultures and kingdoms in the world, but we had no novel, no completed comic, no critical mass of role-playing game materials. BCL went broad and shallow instead of narrow and deep on content, which resulted in the audience having to shoulder too much of the initial world-building work. While *Runes of*

¹⁹ The "Low Lifes" transmedia project tells three independent but related stories concurrently, each following a particular character. Each character's story is told within a single medium, but there are links across the stories, allowing audiences to consume, one, two, or all three stories. For more information, see: <http://grou.ps/lowlifes>, <http://lowlifes.ning.com>, and http://zenfilms.typepad.com/zen_films/2010/03/developing-a-transmedia-project-my-approach-part-1.html.

Gallidon had a lot of content across a variety of mediums at the time of the launch, there was no large story arc or core narrative.

Even in collaborative properties, property owners/creators must remain the primary drivers of canonical content and world narratives. Audiences are a potential source of larger works but are more likely to submit smaller works. That is not a problem, actually, since it provides additional content to keep the property fresh in between the internally developed, larger works. Which brings us to the next topic: how do you integrate internal content with external user-generated-content (UGC) without the property spinning out of narrative or branding control?

INTEGRATION OF UGC (CREATIVE)

The complexities of managing a transmedial property grow exponentially when the prospect of incorporating UGC is added to the equation. How will fans be allowed to interact with and remix canonical content? What creative limitations will be imposed on UGC before it will be accepted as official content within the collaborative property? Will unsolicited submissions be allowed? What mechanisms and policies are necessary to allow fans to produce time-intensive works like novels without fear that their story lines will be obsolete or will conflict with the canon by the time they are finished?

For *Runes of Gallidon*, several processes were considered for how UGC would enter the property. The first was to accept all submissions without regard to quality. Submissions would be reviewed to ensure certain lines were not crossed (e.g., pornography), but quality of content was not to be one of them. This policy dramatically decreased the effort necessary for submission reviews, and it offered the potential to

get a lot of content in the property quickly. The best would rise to the top, as measured by page views, forum posts, ratings, and downloads. But this severely jeopardizes the branding value of the property by mixing in the worst of the UGC with the best of the UGC.

The next policy considered was to place new submissions in a separate area of the website and allow fans to help decide what should be placed in the property. This, however, still allowed for some potential of branding damage as well as confusion about what was and was not canonical (vs. what was still under consideration). Additionally, there was the risk that fans would create derivative works based on content that could be moved to alternate (non-official) status, thereby retroactively causing their derivative work to become non-official as well.

The submissions approach ultimately chosen for *Runes of Gallidon* was to review and filter all submissions. The upside of maintaining a higher branding position outweighed the benefits of garnering lots of content (and theoretically page views). Certainly, any of these approaches might work under the right conditions. For example, YouTube thrives on new content, and quality doesn't seem to be a factor in what gets posted. Meanwhile, Blizzard posts the best of the submitted UGC art on its *World of Warcraft* website, helping it keep the content on the site fresh and encouraging additional fan interaction (who wouldn't want their art on worldofwarcraft.com?).

Next, BCL had to decide how fans would be able to collaborate with us in generating canonical content. Again, this could be done many ways, from a wide-open approach to a very limited interaction. BCL ultimately decided that if a work was clearly

set in Gallidon and was a high-quality work, it would find a way to get it into the property. If the work tended to end the collective narrative or included an element that contradicted with either the world or its established history (e.g., the work incorporates elements of a steampunk nature) but was done well, BCL would post it under an “Alternate History” section, where it would be recognized as official but not canonical.

The comic industry has mastered this distinction. Despite comic publishers constantly rebooting certain titles, splintering off alternate timelines, and playing “what if?” scenarios (one of my favorites is DC Comics’ “Red Son,”²⁰ which explores the implications of Superman landing in the Soviet Union instead of the U.S.A.), comic fans understand the canonical games being played, and they tend to willingly play along. A similar approach can be used effectively to help property owners find ways to maximize fan interaction.

Imposing a more limited collaboration can also help with minimizing continuity issues. Disney’s take180.com site, which includes half a dozen web series, explicitly asks fans to contribute content to the site. Sometimes they ask for submissions such as fake newscasts; other times they simply want fans to post personal stories or opinions about certain topics. Fans can choose to submit images, text, or video, but Disney carefully provides submission parameters regarding actual content.

For *Runes of Gallidon*, BCL cast a wide net, inviting everything from cosplay photos to music to poems in addition to fiction, art, and role-playing game content. BCL

²⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Son

remains open to any story if it makes for a better world narrative without being destructive to the property.

Regardless of how the collaborative opportunities are handled, the rules for participation need to be clearly communicated up front and should align with the unique attributes of the entertainment property. Who owns the content once it has been submitted? What restrictions (if any) are applied to submissions? What are the absolute you-will-be-rejected-if-you-do-this limits? What mediums/formats are acceptable? Expectation-setting with fans is critical in collaborative properties, and the various implications/consequences of collaboration need to be communicated as clearly as the opportunities/benefits.

OWNERSHIP, REVENUE RIGHTS, AND LICENSING (LEGAL)

The most radical components of a collaborative entertainment property involve the legal considerations. The bigger legal issues to address are ownership, revenue rights, and licensing structures.

OWNERSHIP

Traditionally, media companies use a work-for-hire arrangement when soliciting work from independent contractors or other external sources. These arrangements typically involve an all-rights purchase of the content being produced or an exclusive licensing of the content in exchange for monetary compensation. It makes sense from a business standpoint: the property owner bears 100% of the financial risk and wants the same level of financial reward.

Unfortunately, this arrangement is quite capital-intensive, risky, and does not embrace the benefits of a more open approach to co-creating value through collaboration. With *Runes of Gallidon*, BCL chose to not pay for UGC accepted into the property, though this decision was driven primarily by a limited budget. At face value, it would appear to discourage participation by creatives, except for another decision made regarding revenue sharing (the short answer is that BCL's revenue sharing is far more lucrative than that offered by any mainstream publisher; the longer answer is below).

One alternative to work-for-hire is to allow the creator of the UGC work to retain ownership over that work even after its submission and acceptance into the property. This is likely to encourage a higher level of quality submissions and help the property gain a faster/wider acceptance in the marketplace.

What this doesn't address is the issue of how the works within the property are shared. For example, can one writer use another writer's creations (characters, towns, etc.)? If so, under what conditions?

The shared world fantasy ezine *Dargonzine* has a policy that prohibits this without the creator's permission²¹, and certainly, few creatives are totally comfortable with the idea that anyone can play with their creations. Interestingly, BCL agonized over this topic far more than the topic of revenue sharing!

BCL's solution was to keep ownership and revenue rights focused on the work level. Works are typically what we think of when we talk about copyright: a novel, a picture, a song. But how do you protect ownership, attribution, and revenue sharing at

²¹ <http://www.dargonzine.org/writers.shtml#control>. *Dargonzine* is also published under a Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license and is a non-commercial endeavor, helping new and unpublished writers find their way.

the work level and still encourage maximum collaboration and integrated storytelling without creating a Gordian knot of permission paper trails and legal agreements?

BCL decided to keep the collaborative elements focused on the idea level. Ideas are not typically copyrighted: the characters, towns, objects, etc. mentioned within works. Works are owned; ideas are shared²². Thus, John can use a character (i.e., an idea) from Jane's novel (i.e., a work) as a protagonist (idea) in his own short story (work). BCL crafted a custom legal agreement to make this distinction clear, but it works perfectly with the Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license implemented for all *Runes of Gallidon* content.

BCL also decided to implement a "play nice" rule when using other people's ideas. BCL encourages notification, if not permission, before using other people's ideas (though it's not required under the *Runes of Gallidon* legal framework). And BCL uses a higher level of scrutiny on any submission that maims/kills/humiliates another person's character, destroys a city created by someone else, etc.

As a corollary to this, attribution at the idea level is essential for the success of a collaborative property. If you create a character, a town, a magic item, a new starship, etc., you should always receive attribution when someone else uses it. Credit may not always trump money, but when it doesn't, it's a close second.

²² For more details about how works and ideas are handled in *Runes of Gallidon*, please visit <http://runesofgallidon.com/welcome-gallidon-videos> and <http://runesofgallidon.com/sites/default/files/Artisan%20Quick%20Guide.pdf>.

REVENUE RIGHTS

Traditionally, creators of UGC cannot commercially use their derivative works without the permission of the entertainment property owner (and that is rarely given). In a collaborative property, however, the emphasis is on encouraging participation by the audience, and one way to do this is to offer the audience the ability to monetize their derivative works. Ownership and revenue rights can be separated; for example, the property owner may take ownership of all submissions while granting revenue sharing rights only to those submissions selected for admission into the property.

The *Runes of Gallidon* structure allows remixing, copying, and distribution of content under the Creative Commons BY-NC-SA license, but commercial use of that content is prohibited. The only way that either BCL or a creative can make money from any UGC is if the creative submits their work to BCL and that work is subsequently accepted into the property. If that happens, both BCL and the creative exchange commercial rights over the derivative work, allowing each party to sell/license the work. And if either party does make money from the derivative work, they are legally obligated to share a portion of that revenue with the other party. This provides BCL with the commercial control it needs to maximize the value of the *Runes of Gallidon* brand (which benefits anyone whose UGC work was accepted into the property) without removing the ability for creatives to make money themselves from their own works.

Here the work/idea distinction can be very helpful in reducing accounting nightmares. If revenue is shared only at the work level (vs. the idea level), then tracking which dollars belong to which creator becomes a lot easier. True, someone

may remix one of your ideas and make a lot of money from it (you would receive none, since revenue is shared at the work level, not the idea level), but you would still receive attribution as the original creator of the idea. It's unlikely that you would not benefit from someone else's commercial success with your ideas (remember, you should receive attribution, and you retain the right to continue using your idea).

Obviously, most commercial properties that choose to acknowledge UGC do not share revenue or grant ownership over UGC. They may post the UGC on their website (like Blizzard), but that's the extent of the exchange. And for popular properties, fans will often be happy just to have their UGC recognized as official and not require monetary compensation as an enticement to collaborate. Conversely, they may cede ownership in exchange for an up-front flat payment or a back-end revenue share (as with Disney's take180.com, where winners generally receive gift cards but give up almost all control over the UGC they created). There are many possibilities, and the collaborative commercial property model must be tailored to fit the unique attributes of each property.

LICENSING FRAMEWORK

Regardless of the licensing framework chosen, the aim should be to align the licensing rights with the goals of the property. Is the property new? If not, are there existing licensing arrangements that could limit collaborative or transmedial extensions of the property? Should one particular medium be excluded from collaboration due to the expectation or hope of securing an exclusive deal with a media company (e.g., a video game developer)? How much of the official canon is available for collaborative

participation? Can the audience remix each other's derivative works or only official works created by the property owner?

While any kind of licensing framework can be crafted with a custom legal contract, there are also alternatives that have gained a wide degree of market acceptance. One is Creative Commons, a non-profit that has earned a wide following in the creative community for providing free licenses that can live within the existing intellectual property laws of many countries. Aside from being free, Creative Commons licenses have the benefit of being easy to understand. These licenses offer choices in how content can be published in less restrictive ways than the default U.S. copyright law provides. For example, musicians may want to allow free distribution of their digital songs but not allow remixing or commercial use. Default copyright law does not provide an easy, one-time, explicit way to communicate these additional rights to the public at large. Creative Commons has a license that does this, negating the need for musicians to enter into private agreements with individual fans.

Again, there is no single right answer, but the right approach is to ensure that the legal framework selected supports the commercial and creative goals of the property owner.

CONCLUSION

This article touches on only some of the thornier issues involved with creating a collaborative commercial entertainment property. Each property will have distinctive considerations that need to be addressed.

For the creatives who opt to explore the possibilities a collaborative property offers, however, the benefits include a deeper audience engagement, new sources of monetizable content, the serendipitous spontaneity of being involved in an improvisational narrative, and the ability to reach a wider audience by offering multiple entry points into the property through multiple mediums. Happily, this is still very much uncharted territory, and the true rewards have yet to be counted.

Colleen Harris

Helen

Hated of all of Greece. Beloved
of men with eyes. Fruit and flower

of the gods, golden-haired vessel of war.
I am the woman for whom heroes are born

to bleed, for whom nations are built
to be blown into history, for whom

the ocean heaves ships headlong into war.
Queen of Sparta, whore of Troy, carved

into the world's memory as an alabaster arm
draping silken scarves from ramparts.

I was made to make you burn the way
a sacked city burns, and still you beg, *More!*

Jeffrey M. Hopkins

Back in April, Jeffrey contacted the Warrior Poet Group looking to send us a copy of his first novel, *Broken Under Interrogation*, self-published through his own company, [The Hard Oak Press](#). A three-time war veteran from Iraq, in many ways, Jeffrey embodies the Warrior Poet Ideal. In addition to publishing an excerpt of his novel, we sat down and interviewed Jeffrey about writing and his ideals. -DL

An Interview with Jeffrey M. Hopkins



Drew Lackovic: What inspired you to write the novel?

Jeffrey M. Hopkins: I was inspired to write *Broken Under Interrogation* (*BUI* from here out) after my second deployment to Iraq. I was having trouble adjusting back to the "rear" as we call it and spent a lot of time alone with my thoughts. I kept envisioning this character, John Powers, and frankly his background in the novel is my own. He is troubled by the war, by his actions during the war, and goes down the path to despair. I figure that I could have gone down that path too, but I chose to write this novel. The novel has been called by some of the reviewers as the "single most depressing book they have ever read." Sure, the subject matter is not cute puppies or vampires in love, but it is gritty reality. I see a lot of what I write about in the novel happening in the future.

DL: How did your military service affect it?

JMH: *BUI* is loosely based on my experiences in Iraq. I really took the logic of that place, and designed anecdotes that "could have" happened. I also did not want to make *BUI* into a military thriller. Those novels are cheesy and totally unrealistic in my opinion, and represent much of what is wrong with the publishing industry today. Therefore, my military service definitely played a huge role in the formulation of *BUI*. Did I write the book to be part of the debate on torture? I did. In all of the debates I watched, you had some pinhead blonde on FOX News arguing that these "terrorists" should be tortured. Being an interrogator, I know that it doesn't work for intelligence matters. Torture works for despotic regimes bent on intimidating their populace, but when it comes to actual intelligence, it doesn't work. Plus these pinheads did not realize that torture forms the basis for every totalitarian society that has ever left a slime trail across the planet. The pinheads argued for a result without taking the process into account. I even made a reference in the book that "waterboarding" was for pussies. We saw cruelty in Iraq beyond belief. We will continue to see human cruelty there.

DL: Prior to *BUI*, had you considered writing?/What got you into writing?

JMH: Prior to *BUI* I always considered writing but was too much of a coward and too lazy to go through with it. I feel like it is what I am supposed to be doing on this planet — designing sniper rounds for idiots, with my words. I'm only going to write truth, which is why I feel I will never achieve any sort of commercial success. Maybe, after I'm long dead, the truth will become fashionable again. Right now I don't see it. One event in Iraq made me realize why I had to start writing. My first deployment I was nearly eviscerated by a mortar round that failed to explode. It landed about 10 feet from me. I realized I was going to die someday and I felt at that moment like I had better do what I thought my purpose in life was. It's great designing your own life's purpose. It's freedom and it's authentic. My books don't sell particularly well, but I won't stop writing.

DL: I'm interested in your stance on writing the truth. Since much of my background is in Postmodern theory, and wrapped around plural worlds and thought processes, capital-T Truth is a concept that seems unattainable to me. Why is writing the truth so important to you? And is this truth you write something you see as approaching capital-T Truth, or is this more of an ontic truth? Lastly, how are you defining the difference between fiction and nonfiction (or is there such a boundary)?

JMH: I could write a book on this subject. For me, there is no objective Truth, with a capital T. I think that truth is an activity that each person makes manifest through their doings in the world. When I say I will try and write the truth, I will try and design characters that are authentic to an environment and let them unfold in this world. You will see that my worlds are strange and possess their own unique logic. I will not assume anything in my writings. My fiction has to serve as a mirror, and the distance between "reality" and this mirror of fiction is art. My concepts aren't that fully elucidated yet but I am working on that. I think of truth as an abstraction that humans bring about through living. There are artificial modes of life (I see these as static), where an individual degenerates into a mere tool, and there are modes of life that are self-elevating, self-fulfilling. I see this as the life of the artist. I guess you could say that truth is a way of life, derived from past experience and decided upon (chosen) by an individual. If this doesn't make sense I will have to think more about it.

DL: Why did you feel that this story needed to be told?

JMH: *BUI* is fundamentally a story about the American Dream. I feel that everyone always harps and preaches about the American Dream, but never analyzes what it is. There is a material American Dream: that of owning a house and filling it with stuff. This American Dream got us into trouble in the Housing Crisis. There is also the spiritual American Dream: that of making your own way in the world. I think we have lost sight of the second. I wrote *BUI* to remind people that this can all fall apart at any minute if we stop working towards a better future for our children. I know that sounds cheesy, but it is true. Whiners proliferate everywhere in the United States and I believe we

could start advertising tourism to see the World's Biggest Ball of Whine. I'm in Arizona right now. The rhetoric here is psychotic; I'm talking 1930 Weimar Republic. The idiots of the world are better at screaming. We see in *BUI* a corporate police force. With several distressed cities laying off their entire public works, including police; I don't think the reality of *BUI* is too far off. The men in *BUI* do some pretty brutal things because they have demonized their enemies. This is what we see every day in the mainstream media.

DL: From your blog, you seem to have a pretty healthy disdain for the traditional publishing racket. How has the publishing world failed you or other writers? In another of your blog posts you say, "Did the book give you something you could take with you on your journey or did it merely let you step outside of yourself? You will do the ultimate stepping outside of yourself when you give up the ghost and go the way of the dodo. It makes no sense to keep stepping outside of yourself while you are alive. You should be challenging and scaring yourself, building up your resistance to the nastiness of the world. Ten vermiculite columns will not buttress a crushing ceiling. You cannot run forever." How does *BUI* give readers "something to take on their journey"?

JMH: The publishing industry. It's a business. Business is in the business of making money, or you could say the business of business is business. I really don't want anything to do with it. What are best-sellers nowadays? Do they have any literary merit? I don't see any vampire romance novel ever providing meaning to my existence. If it does provide meaning, it's a pretty sad state of affairs. When I walk into a corporate bookstore, it reminds me of walking into the Walmart food section. You have a few good products, you know your mainstays, and you have boxes and boxes of utter junk. The same goes with your bookstore. I make a beeline to either the dwindling philosophy section or classics, and try to avoid getting sick on the way there. I was recently in a bookstore in London, and I found the situation to be quite the opposite. There was a small section of junk (mostly by American novelists) and most everything

else was of a literary bent. I think one symptom of the old-fashioned book publishing industry is mimicry. Just like in nature, it is a survival mechanism. One Norwegian trilogy does well in the marketplace, so now the Norwegian mystery/thriller market is exploding. What is original gets played out. We are great at doing that.

The traditional publishing industry is slow. It is a flabby dinosaur. Books take too long to come to press. Books that shouldn't receive attention are marketed well and novels that should be left to rot on the vine. I really think it is ultimately the fault of American secondary education though, which mass produces idiots at an alarming rate. I think the late novelist John Gardner said it best in *The Art of Writing*: "Junk fiction requires an authentic junk mind." Well, junk minds are the norm. It is only authentic literature that elevates minds above junk status.

DL: Do you have any ideas on how to hijack the general reading audience away from "junk fiction"?

JMH: Everyone has that spiritual moment when a novel really blows their hair back and opens their eyes to a greater possibility of existence. Some of these novels can be downright terrifying and leave you thinking about them for months. I think that what is popular now are novels that give you that "AWWWWWWW" feeling, a sort of cutesy hope that is really only dwelling at the surface and confirming your preconceived notions. People are really hungry for genuine experience. I think the best way to get people to read any novel is to talk to them about it in person. You won't sell millions of books this way, but you'll connect with your audience in a more profound way than selling conspiracy-theory grocery store fodder in advertisements on the subway. Of course, you can also always fool them into thinking they will be able to escape for a while, but you will have hooked the reader into actually thinking. Literature is not about selling books, it is about liberating the intellectually oppressed. I say just keep writing what is true to yourself and you'll be bulletproof. The public will eventually come around; you just have to talk to people in person.

DL: Since founding Hard Oak Press in 2009, have you published other [or others'] books? What are some of the successes/challenges you've encountered in running a publishing company?

JMH: My publishing company, Hard Oak Press, is just getting off the ground. I'm pretty much giving everything away for free now, just trying to attract attention to my ideas. I don't care about money. Writing is the cheapest hobby I have ever had. I really only care about spreading my ideas. My next novel is due out soon, and I am writing #3 and #4 concurrently. All will be written to combat the wave of massive phoniness sweeping the nation. Like I said before though, I will probably never be popular, or respected. I don't care. I really write for myself.

DL: What's your second novel?

JMH: My second novel is completely different from the first. In it I ponder questions of human meaning by having as my protagonist a 14-year-old child who passes through religious, scientific, technological/consumer modes of life — all the while in search for his wife. I am firmly in agreement with Goethe that the highest end of society is the eternal feminine, where women hold men to a high standard and men spend their lives in pursuit of this standard. I think that Golden Ages spring from this sort of societal arrangement and the last time we saw it was in Ancient Greece. The novel contains a two-principle way of life that I think sets our entire Judeo-Christian enterprise on its head. One is a principle for men and the other is a principle for women, and the two are inextricably tied.

- 1) Trust your fellow man and be trustworthy.
- 2) Women should only marry/mate with the strongest and wisest men.

That's it. No God, No Jesus, no collection plate: just those two principles. Tolstoy, in *War and Peace* came up with the statement: Love and Be Loved. I think my statement of trust is more primordial than that. My editor, a female, noted that most of the male characters in my novel, with the exception of the protagonist, are psychotic and misogynistic. My defense for this is that is what I see the vast majority of Biblical

Prophets to be, misogynistic madmen who have been given far too much respect throughout the ages.

DL: What advice do you have for other writers wanting to get their words out to the public?

JMH: My advice to people who want to write? Read good books. Read the classics. Study them on your own. Write your thoughts in notebooks. Capture everything. Don't care what you look like to them, those boring people in the shopping mall. Have a nihilistic confidence in yourself like Oliver Cromwell. Don't worry about getting your head chopped off, just write. Do it!

Jeffrey M. Hopkins

The following are excerpts from the first, second, and twenty-second chapters of Part One of *Broken Under Interrogation*, which follows the post-Iraq war life of Army interrogator John Powers, who — with the help of fellow veteran Mike Miller — turns his intelligence experience into a Machiavellian weapon against the drug dealers of the ghetto he calls home. The novel is available in several formats at [The Hard Oak Press](#). – RD

Excerpts from *Broken Under Interrogation*

When he returned from his first deployment to Iraq, John stepped off the military transport and before he could breathe his first breath of air, a group of old men and women all smiling in matching American flag apparel handed him a McDonald's cheeseburger and said in unison, "Thanks for defending our freedom!" John maintained a smile through his exhaustion and said, "You're welcome." The second time he came back, he wanted to spit in their faces. The third time he came back, he wanted to murder them, but he didn't because they were civilians and didn't know any better.

On the surface, John was unremarkable. If you were to pass him in a public place, you would neither be turned on nor turned off to his appearance. He was ordinary looking with a long beak-like nose that sat square in the middle of an expressionless face. His cold, bluish-gray, beady little eyes were sunken in two large eye sockets and gazed upon the world, taking everything in. He studied and memorized every face he came across with intensity. When he was in his teenage years, John believed that not having any hint of emotion written on his face would make him appear mysterious and aloof to the opposite sex. Most women found him emotionally distant or preoccupied and did not pay him any heed. Over years of practicing his

profession, Powers' inner being came to match his expressionless face, and nothing excited him.

When Powers wasn't reading or exercising, he spent his days sitting in a chair in his spartan living room staring off into space. He thought of the past and tried hard to think of a future for himself. The short, fat doctor at the Veteran's Administration had nothing to offer him but a bottle of pills that made him totally numb and took away his only pastime, his ability to think. The time he spent during the second war in the desert forged him into a hardened unrepentant cynic — to him, people were only interested in fulfilling their own needs and wants, however base and petty those wants were. He had watched with his own eyes how people acted in a total anarchy — the gangs that formed around people not fit for any form of civil society and the power they wielded because they had the will to do heinous acts. This helped to solidify his disgust with the animals that thought to themselves that they were so special. They hid behind facades, masks, and religion to prove to themselves they were better off than the animals and it wasn't eat or be eaten, and the law of the jungle with their kind.

After Iraq, Power's entire life revolved around collecting information that would be of use to him in his endeavors. His latest endeavor would prove to be his last. Living in the neighborhood forgotten by the remainder of the modern globalized society, Powers came to the realization that nothing there was ever going to get better. No one cared outside of the ghetto, and no one cared inside the ghetto. In this place the poor coagulated and formed a crust over a seeping infection. In the ghetto, amongst the school grounds and parks littered with empty glass crack vials and used heroin baggies,

the double-edged despair of hopelessness existed. To find oneself living in a horrible situation was one side of the sword. The sharper side that sliced deeper straight to the marrow was the complete lack of opportunity or ability to do anything about it.

The growing black raven of American nihilism takes wing from the suburbs and flies home to roost in the inner city. It lives, breathes, and takes in nutriment there amongst the abandoned homes and crumbling schools. Without the misery and despair of the ghetto, there would be no impetus for people to flock to the safety of the suburbs. Without the homes abandoned by people moving out of the city center in fear, the low property values caused by the abundance of properties on the market, and the slumlords to buy them up looking for a fast buck — there would be no ghetto. The raven was feeding on racism, and the raven was getting fat. It shit on the American Dream and had pecked out the eyes of hope. John thought to himself, if there was an American Dream it should exist for all Americans, but it didn't, and if it ever did it was as dead and rotten as the Founding Fathers. John could cut the tension around him with a knife. The suburbanites did not feel it yet because they were too busy watching reality television.

Being Americans at heart, people in the ghetto cared about money. They just didn't have any, nor did they have the means to get it legitimately. The future, the youth, the men and teenage boys lined the street corners selling crack cocaine to anyone who would buy. Red Cadillacs and Lincoln Town cars driven by the well-to-do cruised the streets in front of John's home. They were looking to score pussy off of the crack whores that walked up and down the streets and catcalled from steps of an

abandoned church. The church parishioners moved to a nice new structure on the outskirts of town. The "For Sale" sign had fallen over during a windstorm a few years prior and was not put back up again. Neighborhood children threw rocks through the impressive stained glass windows and shattered them. Pigeons took the church as their own and held daily services by shitting all over the busted-up pews and dust that comingled on the floor. Powers watched nightly out his living room window as the filth multiplied on the church steps like a bacterial culture in a petri dish.

Powers analyzed the situation. He sat in his chair and thought hard about it. He came to realize that drug dealers and the addictive substances they profited from were the germ of all the crime and despair in the ghetto. John didn't fault crackheads, junkies, or methamphetamine addicts for the horrible state they were in. Their one bad choice led to the short lifetime of despair and the lonely death they faced. Powers faulted the equation's supply side, where an individual longed for a life of luxury without doing any real work besides importing product and maintaining a business that wholesaled death and slavery to other human beings. It infuriated John that the dope dealers seemed to delight in it at the same time.

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When the SecuriCorp security specialists nabbed John in his small P south-side ramshackle home, they did so at night without the notice of his neighbors. The specialists found his toolbox, which contained enough different blood and other DNA trace material, hair, and bone fragments to link him to the brutal torture of at least

twenty-five individuals. The police photographed each tool separately and placed them into red biohazard evidence bags.

John had chastised Mike several times, but Miller didn't waste the time cleaning up after himself after they talked to someone. For Mike, holding a blood-caked power drill in front of a detainee would often elicit a confession. The detainee was assured of Miller's willingness to use it when they looked into his soulless black eyes, which only lit up with life when he spun the drill bit into place.

In the back of the paddy wagon, Powers struggled to get his bearings. He was jarred out of a restful sleep by the police. He questioned himself and his practices and wondered how the bumbling idiots found out about him. His thoughts drifted to what was about to happen. He knew that he would be interrogated by some overweight doughnut-munching, coffee-swilling police officer, who was entirely out of practice with heavy hitters and was only good at scaring juvenile offenders and sick little pedophiles into confessions. Powers decided to tell the truth about everything he had done — just come right out with it — because the friendly interrogation he was about to face would be absolutely laughable, and at the very least he could bring some closure to the life he had led.

It was important for Powers to have a sense of closure on each chapter of his life as it unfolded. Each session had to end on a high note — a piece of information gained that could be used against the detainee in future sessions, a full confession, a name of an associate scumbag that John could then target to kidnap and repeat the whole process all over again. What became more important was the location of a stash of

drugs that could be destroyed, a shipment transporter that could be robbed and done away with, the name of a dope peddler's girlfriend who could be exploited to draw the dope peddler away from his sanctuary — the possibilities were endless. When John was tracking dope dealers, he made a file on them which contained their resume and daily activities. John became intimate with them, and came to know these men like he would know his own brother. Their resumes read like those of a demon. These men inspired fear and terrorized the community, but John didn't hesitate in turning them over to Mike.

Once they were under Miller's control they were harmless. They were mama's boys, wimps, pansies, pussies, whiners, complainers, and most of all finger-pointers they offered money, positions in their organization, anything to deliver themselves from the trap they found themselves in. They sold out brothers, uncles, lifelong business associates, and friends, but they all ended up the same with two .22 caliber rounds to the area of the skull where occipital and temporal bones fused together. The gunshots did not make enough noise to be heard outside of the abandoned rust belt factories where Miller preferred to do his work. There were areas in the city that were dead to the modern economy and unfamiliar to men, but Powers and Miller were familiar with them all. Powers knew the factories that were large enough to mask the sound of a 5000-watt diesel generator, so that Miller could plug his power tools into a socket and get at it.

Their detainees were familiar with the factories for only a fraction of their soon-to-be short lives. When he talked to them, each detainee was like a closed, locked book

— and John fashioned the key to their very being by asking them questions as the sessions progressed. John knew the detainee's past. When he asked them questions about their past and they told him the truth, he spared them the Miller treatment and gave them the easy death. John always intended to get what he wanted without listening to the men scream. Sometimes it didn't work that way. When each detainee finally *broke*, or opened up and talked willingly without deception, they provided a piece of the puzzle that John hoped to solve. Each tidbit was a triumph and each morsel could become a full course meal. John's final goal was peace and quiet on the streets of P and each detainee they opened up brought them one step closer.

John could not rely on his "interrogation" sessions alone to extract all the necessary information he needed to prove to himself that a weed was in need of removal. He found people to use along the way, to string along, to be friends with, to fool, or to turn against their associates. All of these individuals were scum, too, but he maintained a happy, welcoming face when he or his associates met with them. They were willingly selling out their neighbors, friends, fellow church parishioners, lovers, and sons for that omnipresent feeling that all humans desire — the sense of having superiority and a feeling of power or mastery over someone else. The information they were giving was on the surface more trustworthy than that gained from the interrogation sessions, because the people were willingly coming forward with it. An interrogation victim just had to resist and lie, and many of them just clammed up, even when Miller yanked their fingernails off one by one.

John was a master at feeding people's basest emotions and desires, nurturing them into hate, greed, lust — and finally into the will to dominate. John was their shoulder to cry on, their soundboard, and a great friend in his informant's eyes. They were being used, but as long as they did not know, the relationship could continue. They were merely a means to a greater end: the eradication of all dope dealing scum in P.

John violated one of Immanuel Kant's fundamental maxims of morality, in that he used other moral agents as a means and not as an end in themselves. John used them only as one would use a tool. He picked them up, employed them for a finite purpose, and set them down again when his task was completed, much like a gardener would use a rake or a plumber would use a wrench. Mike Miller used tools as well, but he preferred tools that had sharp bits and caused great pain.

Powers never believed that Kant dealt with the reality of human beings, who were all self-interested irrational animals — especially a hardcore junkie who was without a heroin fix for a few days. Moralists could argue that dealing with low-life scum had clouded John's perception of his fellow man, but Powers saw the same behavior even among decent, hard-working, middle-class mega-churchgoers. They went to a corporate church every Sunday so they could think in their minds and feel in their hearts that they were better than other people; all the while the only thing they—the saved ones — worshipped was money, order, and freedom from violence. Money was the power to do things and engage in activities. The saved ones had money and were therefore intrinsically better than other people without it. They thought that poor

people were bad because God had not blessed the poor people with money in the way that they were blessed with money. Poor people were sinners. All the while, the saved ones failed to remember that money was an invention of man, and so were cities and economies that necessitated money, and so was crack cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine which poor people sold to get rich and feel good about themselves.

Powers didn't fault people wanting to have a sense of power; he faulted their addiction to the means to attain that power. These were addicts who were not treatable because they were addicted to something that didn't exist in reality. They were addicted to the pursuit of the will to power unchecked and unfettered by any sort of morality, and they needed to die for it. These scumbags were like overgrown weeds that choked out the sunlight of hope for all the little seedlings. The children in the ghetto idolized the dope dealers, but soon they would be idolizing dead men. They needed to pay the ultimate price just like the pharaohs and slavers of old. They needed to go the way of Sodom and Gomorrah. God and his angels smote them, but God was dead, and it was up to man to weed the garden now.

A morality channels the will to power into productive energy that is able to be harnessed — otherwise this will blasts outwards like a fire hose of destruction of all in its path. A morality is an internalized way of life. A religion is an external demonstration of a morality that reassures the other people you live with that you are not just drifting aimlessly and are working for the community's greater good, which is that good defined by the community. A religion binds men to each other in a community, and each

individual man to God, but when God died, man's vocation became viewing one another with suspicion.

Powers employed money as a tool and did not view it as an end. Money was a quantum of ability to engage in activities. Powers gave crackheads money for crack, junkies money for smack, and tweakers money for meth — after which, he would secretly follow the giddy addict to the location of the dealer's home. He watched and waited, photographing the addicts coming and going from a long distance and kept a file on each home that served fiends. John did local records checks in order to find out who the owners of the home were. In the beginning he made complaints to the SCi Headquarters in order to see if anything would happen. Nothing ever did. John still did from time to time just to see what sort of competition he was up against.

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John Powers didn't blame the drug dealers for the life they chose. They were just trying to buy into the American Dream of being actually able to call their own shots. There were no jobs to be had in the ghetto. John disagreed with the means they chose to gain that ultimate end of financial freedom, which was the easiest type of self-determination to gain in the United States. It was easiest to pursue happiness if you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth and your parents were rich. If your parents were rich, you had a great chance of getting a top-notch education, even if you lacked intellectual ability. Given two marginal students, the one whose father was an oil scion stood a much better chance of getting into Andover and Yale, than the one whose

father was a day laborer. Money allowed the rich to sneak into windows that the poor couldn't even see into.

Look at the next disheveled poor person or homeless person you see, and record the first thought you have. You are afraid; he or she is most likely a bad person who may rob you. Look at the next rich person and tell yourself you don't assume he or she is good. Tell yourself you wouldn't feel better about yourself if you had enough money to do whatever you wanted. Now what means are you willing to take to gain that freedom? In Iraq those who were the brashest in their use of violence gained the tacit support of the masses who stepped in line to support them as defenders of the faith. In America cutthroat and enterprising business ventures were applauded; it was only a matter of degrees of taking someone's life or ruining them financially. John Powers had only applied Iraqi methods to his own private war on drugs and brought a small slice of Iraq home for everyone to enjoy.

Susanna Childress

Eve's Plea: A Villanelle

Rename the world; begin by calling clouds Your Hand
and let each flower be known by scent alone —
this one is Your Mother's Neck and this one, Wet White Sand.

Our ancient words, only symbols, have long been manned
by those obsessed with tongue as reason, thought as throne:
rename the world, begin by calling a cloud Your Hand.

As for pronouns, refer to yourself only as Your Friend,
but name your greater limbs: this one's Pearl, this one's Stone,
this one is Your Mother's Neck, this one, Wet White Sand.

Then all things will be confused: sky for body, body for land,
and as they should — not lost but sweetly twined, ingrown —
rename the world: begin by calling a cloud Your Hand.

No one will argue, though none will understand:
Why call this tree Balding Priest when we knew it as Pinecone,
why is one Your Mother's Neck and one Wet White Sand?

If you must say anything, say gently, Your Friend can't
denote beauty by just *any* grafted phonemes, or else intone,
Rename the world! Begin by calling a cloud Your Hand!

You'll find in time even fresh significance will demand
the careful latticework of peach pit, kestrel, pelvic bone:

rename the world; begin by calling one cloud Your Hand,
one Your Mother's Neck, and one Wet White Sand.

"Gentle" Josh Makowski

[Karma Tattoo Studio](#) in Erie, PA. doesn't look like your typical tattoo studio. Patrons are greeted by a neutral color palate of tan and cream which sets off the vivid wall art and flash in the studio. There are just some places that exude a certain vibe or feeling to those who enter its doors. A professional calm is how I would describe the feeling I got when I interviewed "Gentle" Josh Makowski, not your usual tattoo artist. The essence of both the environment and owner matching in perfect harmony and I don't think Josh would have it any other way.

Josh Makowski — tattoo artist, artist, author and tattoo machine builder — has been tattooing since 1998, and opened Karma Tattoo in 2006. He apprenticed under an old biker named "Gypsy" Mike at Modern Society tattoo (no longer in existence), fresh out of high school armed with a book of sketches. Those sketches were his springboard to a career in tattooing and were his key into the world he belongs.—SA

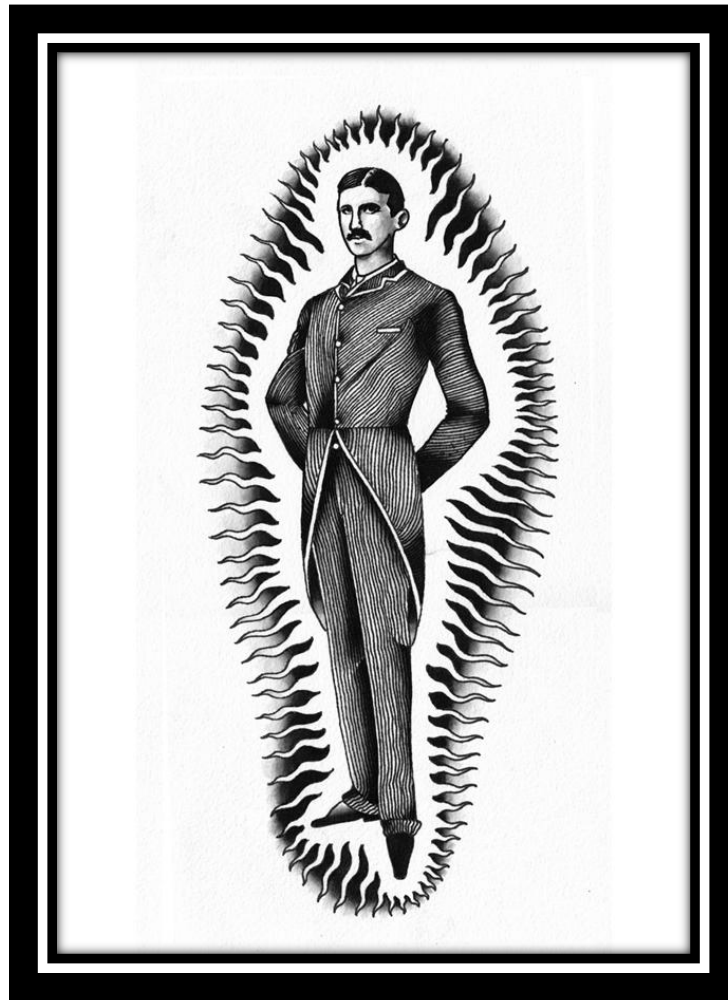
The Passion of "Gentle" Josh Makowski



Susane Andracki: First question, just kind of an icebreaker, how'd you get into tattooing?

Josh Makowski: I started tattooing in '98. Uh, actually before that in '96 I was a senior in high school and I just fell in love with tattoos. No one in my family had them so I wasn't exposed to them until my friends in started getting tattoos, and I just fell in love with them, I was just like, "wow." It just seemed different from anything else. It's art, but it's personal and it's deep and it has to do with people and, you know, not just a

canvas and it seemed really special to me, so I just latched on to it. I spent my whole senior year just drawing tattoos, which I wasn't really supposed to be doing, but that's what I knew I wanted to be doing at that point. Then I got out of high school and began going around to different shops showing them my really shitty drawings at the time and just getting advice from people and getting turned down a lot about looking for apprenticeships. Finally I got into a little shop called Modern Society. It's not there anymore, but it used to be over on 26th and Raspberry.



TESLA — "GENTLE" JOSH MAKOWSKI

SA: What is your philosophy of tattooing?

JM: I think my general philosophy is just to be a tool for the client, to put some of my own style into it, but really try to figure out what the customer's looking for, what they're trying to express, and to express that for them in the best way possible. In the

most responsible way, too. By responsible, I mean doing a tattoo that lasts a long time and that looks good for a long time and that expresses what they wanted.



ADAM BACKPIECE — "GENTLE" JOSH MAKOWSKI



MATT PHOENIX— “GENTLE” JOSH MAKOWSKI

SA: “Gentle” Josh Makowski. How did you get the name “Gentle”?

JM: Some kid said I was gentle, but I’m sure his previous experience was pretty bad to call me gentle in comparison. I have a fairly gentle demeanor I guess, though. As far as tattoo artists go, they can be pretty rough around the edges. I’m actually kinda nice to people. I try to be nice to people.

SA: Personable.

JM: Yeah.

SA: I noticed that in your book [The Mysterious Tattoo Machine](#).

JM: Oh, you heard of it?

SA: That in your book you talk about your client relationship. How important is it that you establish that relationship with your client in terms of the art form?

JM: In terms of the art form it's very important, yeah. It's always really tricky because people come to me with different stages of the idea. Sometimes they're not fully formed yet, sometimes they are, and I have to sort of translate that on paper. It's always a challenge.

SA: Also going along with things you mentioned in your book, you talked about how you think that apprenticeships are pushed to the back burner. Do you have any apprenticeships or do you have plans for taking on an apprentice in the future so you can pass on your way of tattooing?

JM: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I've apprenticed a few people around the area over the years, and each one was kind of a learning process. When I opened this place, I — let's see, this was probably about a year after I opened this place, my art really started to stabilize having my own environment here — I really started to feel more comfortable with myself and in turn I began to feel more comfortable with apprenticing. But what I'm getting back to is that the one apprentice that I did finish with here is working here now. His name is "Screech" or Cory. He was probably the first one, I don't know if I should say that — I don't want to piss some people off, but I feel very satisfied.

SA: So you feel he's the most complete?

JM: Yeah. Yeah, he's as good as me in, you know, a year and a half, two years of apprenticing. I do have one apprentice right now, Andy. He's just finishing up, and he's been here just a little over a year, and going through the same process that I've developed over the years of teaching as far as what I see works and what doesn't, and he's doing really well. I sort of inherited him from another artist that quit on him and us, but it's going really good now. So I have a definite process, where a lot of other apprenticeships are not like that. My apprenticeship was not like that at all; it was like, you know, I'll show you this when I have time, and I'll show you that when I have time,

and then get in there and do it. Learning that way I just don't think works as well. I mean, there are a lot of things that you learn by actually doing that you can't actually teach, but there's so much groundwork you can cover before you get to that point — so much practice that you have to do on paper before you just get to skin. Whereas if you just practice with skin that can be really bad.



SA: Yeah. I can imagine. Also in your book you talk about how knowing the history of tattooing is so important. I noticed that you also build your own machines; do you teach that art to your apprentices as well? Because, in a way, those machines are just as beautiful as some of the stuff that you put on skin. I

MACK THE KNIFE STARBOARD — "GENTLE" JOSH MAKOWSKI

noticed on one of them you put some disks in the head designs.

JM: Mm-hmm, yeah. Yeah, they're pretty crazy, but yeah, I do.

With my apprentice right now, Andy, he built both of his first machines and that's what



he uses on a daily basis. The building of machines is just even more in-depth training I can give them. Some people just have a knack for machines and they like it; some people

WORLDS STARBOARD — “GENTLE” JOSH MAKOWSKI

don't — they're more interested in the art side of it, but knowing how they work is really important because if you don't, I mean what are you going to do? Buy a new machine every time one breaks down? They're machines, they break down from time to

time. Basic understanding is really important. I think a lot of tattooists are lacking in that knowledge.

SA: So do you have a relationship with your machine as more of an extension of yourself?

JM: To a certain extent. I mean I like to switch them around; I like to use different machines depending on what I'm doing. I usually have four machines that are my daily runners, but I have backups too, because one will not be working the way I want it so I'll want to have another I can grab if I need to. But yeah, after you start using a machine for a while you start to develop a trust for it, you know? You know it's going to break down eventually, because it's a machine, but you do start to trust it as an extension to you.

SA: If you have anything you want to say to someone reading this article what would you want them to know about you as an artist, author, and person?

JM: I don't really know. I guess I'm just someone who found what they really love to do, and I consider myself really lucky for that. And if you're looking for a tattoo, come see me, give me a chance. That's all, I guess.

Susanna Childress

Taking Thistles

Thistles mock all, growing. . .
in a heap of broken glass with last year's soot.
— Genevieve Taggard, "American Farm, 1934"

In the moments after you have told the patient sitting
across from you she has cancer, the prognosis threatening
to slit the room's throat, papers and charts in your hands and she,
silent, looks up — who are you? Which
of the great plaited gorges of self manage the words
that must cross from diaphragm to tongue
and settle like the dusty yellow stamen of the amaryllis in its own
red home? The summer I called out

in my sleep for Scotland, you swerved to a stop
on the highway, wrapped your hands in an old sweatshirt
and, down in the muck of the ditch, sawed at the barbed stalks
of thistles with a house key. Sister, we used to spin
around the dinner table with forks in our hands
and even the galloping pup could not squeal louder than we,
lithe little dog who would mark your arms with his dying
on the roadside in the wake of a hurtling

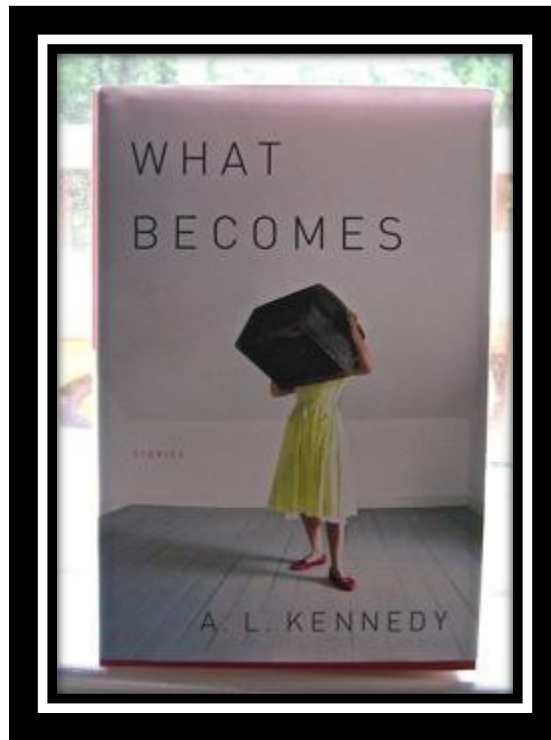
pickup. *It's all right*, you said of the bites below your elbow,
scarred soft now as dried apricots, *he didn't mean*
to hurt. This time the woman in your office lurches
as though she'll retch but instead stretches her arm across
your desk to fling the picture frames, coffee cup, stack of files
wide. The clattering may have gone on

for a year. You know what sound paper makes, sent in a flurry
to the floor. Then the hands that took thistles

from their mottled home for the sake of my lost heart
reach for her: we rarely mean to hurt. Though she
shakes a bit she will take your fingers, each print
perceptive as the stethoscope's, round
as the thrombocytes that beat and beat and beat.

Kilean Kennedy

***What Becomes* by A.L. Kennedy: A Book Review**



The Scottish writer A.L. Kennedy's latest collection of stories reads like some distant transmission launched from a group of people on the brink of irrevocable and complete sadness, broken souls that probably don't care if anyone receives the message.

Luckily for us, the transmission is certainly worth hearing. In the collection's titular story, a man leaves his wife and suddenly finds himself alone in a movie theater in a strange town. On the surface it's a simple enough arrangement, until the movie he's paid to see fails to appear on the screen in front of him and he can't decide whether to sit quietly in the theater and wait it out, or do something about it. This

allows Kennedy, as the confident and sure ruler of this small universe, to open up and explore this man's past and what it is exactly that's led him to this particular moment. As with most of her stories, this is a short one even though Kennedy's language makes the entire piece feel gigantic. Here's a description of this same man, with the author taking a tight and close focus on, of all things, his luggage:

This evening it would be waiting inside his hotel room, crouching by his bed like the guard dog in an unfamiliar house. It always was by his bed, no matter where he was sleeping, neatly packed for when he'd have to leave, fill it with his time and carry it the way he'd enjoy being carried, being lifted over every obstacle.

More often than not Kennedy seems unable to write about anything without seeing it anew or investing another dimension to what might appear normal and commonplace — an impressive feat considering that the subjects in this collection, the milieu as it were, are the same as those found in the steady flow of contemporary fiction being published these days: loss of a child, adultery, suburban malaise. The list goes on and on and it is, again, seemingly familiar fare. But Kennedy has a gift for language and a rhythm and tone few short story writers can match. Even better, each one of the stories in this particular collection has at least one moment striking enough to jolt you upright in your chair. Nothing forced or gimmicky in the least, just strong and vivid and always earned, even when, as in the opening story, it involves an excessive amount of human blood flung about an otherwise pristine kitchen.

Recently Kennedy has been moonlighting as a stand-up comic and this makes perfect sense considering the symbiotic relationship between tragedy and comedy. The two are inseparable — an author can't really break your heart until she makes you

laugh. Which means Kennedy is damn funny, unlike a lot of other writers working these days. Easy proof of this is on display in a passage near the beginning of the story

“Marriage” with a husband’s attempt to describe his matrimonial doom:

The fact of this not working is so very obvious that he can picture it forming a cloud, an area of staining somewhere in his brain which will be exactly the colour of failure — failure being, now he thinks about it, a mix of yellow and acid green. With maybe a touch of brown. Yes, there ought to be brown. Shit brown.

Kennedy has already received beaucoup awards and accolades for her previous work, including nonfiction as well as novels and story collections, and probably doesn’t need more praise lavished on her. But that would be a disservice to appreciative readers unfamiliar with her work. Anyone interested in current literary fiction should read Kennedy if for nothing else just to experience her brilliant use of language. It’s entirely original and worthy of numerous repeats. The laughter and the heartache, the real provinces of Kennedy’s work, almost come easy by comparison.

Loreen Niewenhuis

Excerpt from
A 1,000 Mile Walk on the Beach:
One Woman's Trek of the Perimeter of Lake Michigan

In 2009, Loreen Niewenhuis went in search of an adventure. She walked all the way around Lake Michigan, a journey of 1,000 miles. Here is an excerpt from her book-in-progress, *A 1,000 Mile Walk on the Beach: One Woman's Trek of the Perimeter of Lake Michigan*

INLAND SEAS EDUCATION CENTER

I went into the city of Suttons Bay before I began hiking the final 147 miles of the Lower Peninsula. I wanted to visit the Inland Seas Education Center there. This organization has a building with offices and exhibits, but their focal point is a sailboat specifically designed to take groups of children out onto the lake. It is a floating classroom and on it the kids take samples from the lake, do scientific measurements, and interpret their findings as they learn about the lake's ecosystem.

I entered the center and poked around the displays a bit. There were many deep fish tanks teeming with lake life, and, nearby, a life-size model of the sea lamprey. This snakelike fish has a round mouth lined with sharp teeth that it uses to attach to its host fish. It looked like it would be painful to have one of these suckers attached to you. I'd seen photos of large salmon with multiple round wounds from the lamprey. They can suck the life from even the largest fish. The measures undertaken to control the lamprey populations involve chemically treating the streams where they spawn.

Recently scientists have isolated and synthesized a lamprey pheromone, the chemical signal that the male secretes to attract females so that little lamprey can be produced. Scientists are testing it to see if it is suitable to attract mature lamprey into traps. Early tests prove it is effective in attracting both female and male to the traps, like it's a "lamprey party time" message.

There was a large display about the invasive zebra mussel. A bicycle that was extracted from the lake was suspended from the ceiling above tanks filled with live zebra mussels. The bike was completely encrusted with their shells like someone with a glue gun and a crafting mania went wild decorating it with little striped shells.

I wandered back to the office area and tracked down Tom Kelly, the director of the center. He had e-mailed me about their work and invited me to go out on the bay on their boat. I introduced myself.

He ushered me into his office and moved large stacks of folders from chairs to the floor so I could sit. Tom had graying hair and a salt and pepper beard. He looked like he'd be at home at the wheel of a triple-masted schooner. "How's your hike going?"

"Fantastic. I've walked all the way from Chicago to your office so far," I smiled. "I like your zebra mussel display."

"Those little guys have really changed the bay," he said, referring to the Grand Traverse Bay, that scoop of water that is bisected by the Old Mission Peninsula north of Traverse City. "We've seen the water clarity go way up since they colonized the waters here."

"How long have you been taking measurements in the bay?"

"Twenty years now."

"That's a lot of data."

"More importantly, we've taken over 80,000 kids out on the water. Not only do they have the experience of sailing, they also interact with the lake in a hands-on, scientific way. For the lakes to stay healthy, they've got to matter, not only to us, but to these kids and their kids."

"I couldn't agree more."

"Let me show you our boat," he said, springing up from his chair. He grabbed a rubberized rain slicker from a hook by the back door and slipped into it. It was drizzling as we made our way through the puddles to the dock. "Sorry it's not a good day for a sail."

"I'll take you up on that another time," I said, thinking about the miles I still had to walk that day down the bay to Traverse City.

The sailboat was seventy-seven feet long, wooden, and painted green and white. He pointed out some things on deck, then plunged down into the hold, the heart of the floating classroom. The hold was designed around a small laboratory with pH meters, test tubes, reagents, and microscopes. Narrow, bunked berths lined the inside of the hull for when they take small groups out for longer trips. A normal class trip would include touring the educational exhibits in the center, then going out on the boat into Grand Traverse Bay where the kids take samples of the water and lake life. They perform scientific measurements like pH, water clarity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, phosphate and nitrate levels. They can also view plankton through a microscope-video

setup, study sediment and lake plants, and catch fish and other organisms living in the lake. The kids do the tests under the supervision of the staff, then record their data. The data has charted two decades of changes in the bay, including the increasing clarity since the zebra mussels took up residence in the Great Lakes.

One of the keys to restoring the lakes is to educate kids about the importance of this vast resource, that it is a gift and we need to be its stewards. What better way to convey this message than to have the kids experience the wind and waves of Lake Michigan, to pull up a bucket of water or bottom sediment, and to peer into the secrets of the lake with a microscope?

I thanked Tom for his important work, shouldered my pack, and headed south.

THE HEAVENS OPEN

After twenty-four days and over 350 miles on the Lake Trek, I had seen some wild wind and waves, and even some snow flurries, but very little rain. That changed on the first day of this segment. I had to walk south along Route 22 toward Traverse City in the steady rain and with the low clouds hovering at what felt like the level of my forehead. The clouds stayed put, but the rain tapered off after only an hour, and my rain gear kept me comfortably dry during the deluge. The *swish-swish-swish* of my rain pants gave a different rhythm to my walking.

As always, I tried to keep as near the lake as possible, but along Grand Traverse Bay I had to stay on the shoulder of the nearest road for most of the way. The bay keeps the water calmer than on the open lake and this allows for sediment to deposit along the shore and water plants grow in these protected areas. There are many

houses built near the water for this reason, too. If I walked at the waterline, I'd be in their very small backyards, and grasses grow out into the water, effectively eliminating that "public zone" that I had been walking for most of the trek to this point. I stuck to the roads and made my way to Traverse City, then, the next day, up the East Bay to Elk Rapids.

PLANTING FISH

In Elk Rapids on the east side of the bay, I met two guys who worked for the DNR. They were driving a truck used to transport small salmon (called fingerlings) to the lake.

"Are you guys putting fish into the lake?" I asked.

"No, all the fish are planted already this year."

That's what they call it. Planting fish. Like a crop. There are lots of coho and Chinook salmon in the lake. These are both Pacific Ocean species that we now plant each year. These fish still have the instinct and ability to spawn, but most of the rivers where they lay their eggs are too silty for successful hatching of most of their eggs. So, each year, the DNR gathers eggs and sperm from mature salmon, grow them up in several large hatcheries around the Great Lakes, then release the fingerlings into the rivers in the spring.

Okay, I'm going to say it: we have really screwed up the ecosystem of the lake. Fish like the lake herring, emerald shiners, yellow perch, walleye, whitefish, and lake sturgeon used to co-exist in waters up to 150 feet deep. Deeper-water species like

chub, sculpin, and lake trout stayed further out in the lakes. The lake was filled with fish, and the system was in balance.

When settlers displaced the Native tribes around the Great Lakes, everything was tossed out of balance. It began with the deforestation in the late 1800s and rolling all that lumber into the rivers to float the logs to mills. At its peak, the city of Muskegon alone had around fifty sawmills operating simultaneously. It was a wood-driven economy in the 1800s. Wood fed most steam-powered machines like the boats on the lake. Wood was needed out on the plains to build shelters for the westward-bound settlers. Wood was needed in abundance after the Chicago Fire.

Wood was, simply, money.

Deforesting the riverbanks removed the shade from the rivers and allowed the sun to warm the water. Species of trout and other fish that had spawned in these cool rivers for thousands of years still swam upstream, but in many rivers the water was now too warm for their eggs to hatch, so their numbers diminished. Then people overfished the lakes. As early as the late 1800s there were reports that annual whitefish harvests declined by more than half over twenty years. Sturgeon harvests fell even more drastically — by almost 80% — over the same span of time. Fishermen back then didn't realize that sturgeon don't even think about spawning until they are at least twenty years old. All those monster fish they pulled out of the lakes — sturgeon can grow up to six feet long and weigh 200 pounds — were the breeding stock of the species.

Another species that was harvested completely to extinction was the giant freshwater mussel. They were gathered for their shells that made excellent buttons, a multi-million dollar industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When plastic buttons displaced shells, it was already too late. By then all the mussels were gone.

As manmade channels were dug, invasive Atlantic species like the alewife (a silver fish in the herring family) and sea lamprey made their way into the lakes. The lamprey preyed on larger fish and the alewife population exploded because there were no predator fish to eat them. At one time, it is estimated that 90% of the fish biomass in the lakes was alewives. These little fish (they grow to only about six inches long) can't deal with the lake warming too quickly, so they often have mass die-offs in the spring. Back in the 1970s when they'd die by the millions, front loaders and dump trucks were sent to the beaches to scrape up and haul away the tons of little, dead, silver fish. And the *smell!!* Well, exactly like rotting fish. For miles along the lakeshore.

Enter the current practice of growing up coho and Chinook salmon, then planting them so they can feed on the alewives and keep their population in check. But then other invasive species like the round goby enter the lakes. These fish, along with many other species of both plant and lake life, were brought to the lake in that ballast water. The round goby feed on almost anything. People along this segment of my trek and all around the lake spoke of years past when they would catch a stringer of perch in an afternoon, but now caught mostly round goby when they caught anything at all.

I walked bridges over shipping canals south of Chicago that were installed to connect Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River system. This is another entry point for invasive species, and the Asian carp that has taken over the Mississippi River is now making its way toward Lake Michigan's waters. The Army Corps of Engineers had installed two electric barriers in the canals, but at least one carp was found on the other side of the barriers. These fish are voracious eaters and spawn three times a year. They would quickly dominate the ecosystem in the Great Lakes, devastating the sport fishing industry.

The Great Lakes have a rather orchestrated, man-controlled ecosystem at this point, and if the Asian carp enter the system, it will only get worse.

MISS SADIE AND THE COWBOY

North of Elk Rapids, I was able to get off the road and return to the shoreline. There were still areas of wetlands, but there often was a ribbon of sand through the wetter areas for me to walk. Healthy wetlands are good for the lake. They filter the water, are havens for young lake life, and shelters for wildlife. I saw schools of small fish and tadpoles, many birds, and even a very fat, black snake in these areas. There is only one venomous snake in Michigan, the Massasauga rattler. They are pretty rare, and are listed as a "species of special concern" due to their dwindling numbers. I thought the snake I saw was a rat snake, but later learned that rat snakes probably don't live that far north in Michigan. I looked up the Massasauga and saw that it can be almost completely black at times and that it loves to live in these coastal swales and marshes. It may have been a rattler. We startled each other and it streaked off into the

bushes. I also saw my first bald eagle of the trek along this stretch. It flew parallel to the shore with a large fish in its talons.

A local woman, Gerry, who had been following my adventure contacted me and asked if she and her dogs could join me as I walked the east side of Grand Traverse Bay. We met up north of Elk Rapids. Gerry had moved from southeast Michigan up to Antrim County, a place she had fallen in love with over the years. She was a happy woman, brimming with facts and history about the area. Her dogs, a terrier named Miss Sadie and a cocker spaniel named the Cowboy, also joined us. Like any dogs I'd seen on the beach, they were having the time of their lives. Gerry took an interesting approach to the leash law: she had each dog on a leash, then looped the leashes together so the dogs "walked" each other. It worked quite well and they kept out of trouble by sticking together.

The waterfowl seemed to congregate and pose for us as we walked. Gulls perched on rocks offshore while several swans glided by. Pintail ducks gathered their large broods of chicks and scooted out into the bay together. The water was shallow quite a ways out from the shore and blooms of the algae *cladophora* lay in the shallows and in patchy heaps up on land.

"When it warms up," Gerry said as we walked over a clump of the algae, "this stuff rots and stinks something awful."

"Is this an invasive algae?" I asked.

"No, it's native, but it's been growing out of control the last few years."

"That's *phragmites*," I said, pointing to a tall patch of grass on the shoreline.

"That's invasive, and I hear it's almost impossible to get rid of."

"I've seen more and more of that along here lately, too." Gerry knew her wildflowers. She pointed out the bright yellow marsh marigold, also called cowslip.

Gerry and her canine companions couldn't stay with me for too long since she had to get to work and the dogs looked like they had earned their afternoon nap. She told me about the large deposit of Antrim shale that I would find further north, up near the town of Norwood. She said that the Native Americans used to go there to harvest special stones for their arrowheads and tools. I thanked her and her dogs for their company, then they headed back to their car.

INTO THE WILD

As I walked north along the east side of the bay, I could see both the Old Mission Peninsula, then, past that, the Leelanau Peninsula across the calm water. Both of these tips of land have historic lighthouses on them which long ago guided boats past the shallows and into the safety of the bay. I had once spent a week as a volunteer keeper at the Grand Traverse Lighthouse. It was in November, so much of our work was getting the buildings battened down for the harsh winter on the point. The other volunteers and I put boards up over windows, wrapped tarps around stone planters, and decorated the lighthouse for the holiday season visitors. In the days of manning the light, the keeper would carry oil up the stairs every night to fuel the flame (in the time before electricity). The Grand Traverse Lighthouse was operational for over 100 years, decommissioned in the 1970s. There is now an ugly metal tower with a

rotating beacon on the shore there that guides navigation. But ships now have GPS and radar and sonar, so, even if the light loses power, there isn't a panic to light a fire or to carry oil back up the narrow, steep stairs to the lighthouse tower.

When I passed the tip of the longer Leelanau Peninsula across the bay, the waves picked up since the area where I was walking was no longer sheltered by this point of land. I was back on the open lake, and the shoreline was a little more scrubbed of vegetation. The shoreline transitioned from tumbled, colorful stones to sand, then, near the town of Norwood, to the scattered pieces of tumbled, grey shale that Gerry had told me about. A massive outcropping flanks this stretch of shore, and roundish stones the size of basketballs (and larger) called concretions sit in the shallow surf. These stones formed within the shale and are comprised of a type of calcite called anthraconite. As the shale fell away over thousands of freeze/thaw cycles, these huge stones popped out of the crumbling shale wall.

I had never seen geology like this along the lake (and would not see it again during my trek). Along some sections of this area, it looked like someone had paved the shoreline with black shale tiles. In other sections, like someone had scattered tens of thousands of palm-size pieces of shale, each irregular piece with its edges smoothed by the tumbling action of the waves. It almost looked like a giant puzzle box had been ripped open and the pieces scattered on the shore. A small waterfall cascaded down a wall of the exposed black rock, and along another stretch, grasses and mosses had grown out of pockets in the wall, softening the rock face with tendrils of green. At one point, there looked to be some chert mixed into the shale wall. This is a form of quartz

which fractures, leaving sharp edges, so this may have been the stone that the Native tribes used for scrapers and arrowheads. The shale, I think, would have been too soft to have been much use for tools.

It was along a very remote stretch of this park where I saw some enormous tracks a ways off in the sand. *Huge dog*, I thought. Then, as the tracks came nearer, *Someone should clip the long nails on that giant dog*. When I came upon a decaying log that had been ripped to shreds on the shoreline, I thought, *Wow looks like a bear did this*. A black bear had, indeed, walked this shoreline not too long before me. I placed my hand in the sand next to the impressive footprint and took a photo. Straightening up, I smelled the air for that musky, bear smell, but I didn't detect anything nearby.

Susanna Childress

Saint Gabriel

Here they brought thousands
of the hurricane's dead. Even the dogs
knew to stay away, low rumble in their throats,

September begun with a lurch and dream
they whimper to forget. It is not enough
my husband teaches sixth graders,

cajoles their love for language. Here, town
of the archangel, bodies keep coming, their second
deaths: his students have started school

with *Call of the Wild*, and where in past years
girls blanched and resisted the chapters
of blood and rage, boys triumphing

with their own pubescent gestures —
they don't say a thing, quieter, he says,
in general, which is more like a sickness

than a gift in middle schoolers. The warehouse
on the edge of town is full of drowned bodies
waiting again for water, a final bath. My husband

comes home with a chestful of certain defeat,
certain joy, pulls my wrists to the pulsing points

in his neck: today on the portico he came upon

a child talking into her hands, the way
an old woman holds her bluest vein close
to recall its secrets. The girl was practicing

her vocabulary, chanting words of the frontier
into her fingers as though her body
would hold them, call them forth

for the moments that have no words, those
she cannot name, skittering in and out of the longest
vowels, like a fierce angel, setting them free.

Midwife to Bathsheba

And if you had covered yourself in sackcloth and ash,
 if you ceased bathing on sunlit rooftops for fear

that some man, any man might see you and want,
 if you built your modesty a pedestal of sandstone and silk

and bowed to it under the weight of your fear,
 still your soldier would have gone to the war.

Still your warrior might have taken an arrow,
 still some other plot may have hurried his death

in this land where kings come to glory in more blood than most.
 If you had tempered your glory and bound up your hair,

and prayed in goodwill to your fierce Lord of Hosts,
 if your knees had been worn with the care of such faith,

still the Lord may have wanted the King to take heed,
 still your hips may have gated royal sons,

still you may have birthed the best wisdom of men.
 What woman, what man without the direct hand of God

can put time on a table and command it to stop?

John Seay

Memory Crumbles

I didn't recognize it at first, the narrow street jutting out to the left as I drove down old Highway 78 and into the heart of Irondale. I'd already passed the Original Golden Rule Bar-B-Cue and the abandoned Food World where we used to shop for Otter Pops and juice boxes before stumbling across Rock Ridge Road. The realization that I was within minutes of the house where I lived from birth until the age of four hit me the way the crushing humidity would when I finally opened the door to my car and stepped onto the cracked, baked pavement. I was out there by accident — a mix-up at the post office had forced me into my car and to the central office to retrieve a package containing my new laptop computer. I'd been looking for the interstate and the quickest route home, and had instead stumbled across my past.

There it was, Rock Ridge Road, pockmarked and cratered like the face of an adolescent boy. Apparently in the twenty-three years since last I'd ridden over it, no one had deemed the street worth repaving. Besides the road, nothing was in view but the interstate a quarter of a mile to my right, and a rusted metal sign to my left advertising property no one in their right mind would buy. My car slowed to a crawl as I deliberated. Memory is tricky, and my experience has always been that the images in my mind only tangentially correspond to their analogues in reality. I hadn't seen the old house since my family moved, though I'd imagined it many times since, filling in the gaps in memory with sepia-toned photographs from a leather-bound family album. Was it better to remember the house as it had become in my memory, or to see it again,

holding my recreations up to the harsh light of reality? After a pause, I flipped the turn signal and directed my car quickly across the other lane.

Immediately I began remembering. I had vague recollections of these weather-faded houses, something telling me that the empty lot behind the big red one to my right had once contained a rusted trampoline, probably long since disposed of, or trucked off to some other location. I remembered falling off it once, from what seemed like an impossibly great height, and onto the ground with a thud, tears already welling in my eyes. When my mother found out we had been jumping unsupervised, I wasn't allowed to visit anymore, and eyed the forbidden object from behind trees with the kind of covetous longing most major religions forbid. Now as I drove past its former dwelling place, a boy in bright red shorts and no shirt tore away from his mother and ran into the street. He raised his two bony hands and shot at me with an imaginary rifle until his mother yanked him back into the yard. It was the same maneuver I likely would have attempted fifteen years ago, to similar results (except for the fact that my mother never let me romp about shirtless).

As I continued driving, flashes of other memories broke against my consciousness and receded before I could apprehend them. I wasn't sure if I trusted what I was seeing, or what I was remembering. The house with the semicircle driveway, for example, I vaguely remembered as being the home of another little boy, the one whom I never really liked but played with anyway and whose mother was blind. I thought I remembered, one day after sneaking a Popsicle out of their refrigerator, running across that driveway as fast as my skinny, short legs would carry me. The blind

mother was reclined on the couch, the television on when I'd sneaked into the kitchen through the unlocked backdoor. The boy had told me, promised me there were Popsicles in the freezer, but that his mother would not let us have them. He told me to go get them, so I did.

I remember opening the back door, then dragging a chair to the refrigerator, careful not to make noise. After all, I reminded myself, her handicap was seeing, not hearing. The freezer door opened and the suction, like a kiss, sounded loudly and echoed over the cracked linoleum. "Who is that?" she shouted from the living room. "Come here this instant!" My tiny heart — then probably only the size of a tangerine — pounded furiously as I stuffed my grubby hand into the cardboard box, grabbing the first thing that felt cold. Her heavy feet hit the ground as she rose from the couch, hands reaching out desperately. "Stop!" she told me, but I was gone. The Popsicle was banana-flavored, and I was eating it ten minutes later when my mother told me we were moving to another neighborhood, across town. I remember I was sitting on the rusty, yellow swing set eating the yellow banana-flavored Popsicle and reflecting on what a close call it had been, and how it was worth it to be sitting there lazily eating the Popsicle as the Irondale sun made my fingers sticky with melted and flavored sugar water. Whenever I remember the move now, I think of yellow, and of bananas.

I kept driving, neck craning, anticipating the street I had not seen in twenty-three years but which I expected to recognize. At first I missed it. I hurried into a dead end to turn around, my car slipping off the road and into gravel and then throwing rocks and dust as I accelerated back onto the street. I pulled over onto the side of the road,

across from the house and called my mother to make sure. "Is it the house that looks like a barn?" I asked her. She told me that it was, and laughed. "It was never the prettiest house on the block," she said. Shaped like an upside-down capital "U," the house was vaguely Dutch and, as I'd suspected, only vaguely corresponded with the house from my memories. A few years ago I visited my elementary school lunchroom for the first time since the sixth grade, and had been amazed. Everything then had been so huge, while now it was only the size of two standard classrooms. Things in my memory had stayed the same size; I had tripled.

Still, I wondered if my old house had been altered. It took me awhile to place it as I studied it from inside my car. There were angles I hadn't remembered, windows allowing light into rooms I couldn't quite place. And where memory had deposited a window, I found none. Yet gradually I began to see the resemblance; gradually my memories altered, and the disparities were made harmonious. There was the front porch, under which I'd hid for several hours while my brother Jeff hunted for me, brandishing a stick and shouting. He was livid, because even though he'd strictly forbidden me from entering his room, that day while he was at school I had systematically dumped out all of his board games into a pile in the center of the floor. I remember thinking he would be excited, that we would invent some new game that somehow used all of the pieces. Unfortunately, he did not share my excitement, and I barely escaped his clutches, running as fast as I could as he tripped over a wayward Battleship piece (and thus I accidentally "sunk" not a battleship, but my brother).

The neighborhood had not aged well — nothing had been developed since I'd seen it last. The roads were narrow and worn. I remember that crossing the street took ten seconds when I was a kid. Now a big enough step would carry me close to the other side. It appeared the house next door housed a young family where once before it was home to an elderly woman.

She called the police one day when some friends of mine and I dug up a portion of her newly sculpted yard and hid Matchbox cars there. Now the yard was nothing but dirt and patches of brown grass. Adjacent to my house had been the house of my best friend. I can't remember his name, but I have a picture of him with his arm around me. We are three years old. I am dressed in red shorts and a blue- and white-striped shirt that my mother has made me tuck in. My hair is neatly combed. He is wearing a beaten and worn green shirt and is missing a front tooth. His jeans, stained with dry dirt, hang off his bony body. I wonder if he ever went to college, and suspect that he did not.

The first time I tried and failed to spend the night out was at his house. I didn't last an hour before calling my parents, crying, to come pick me up. The next week I slept there successfully, because they moved my bed next to the window where I could see my house. "See, that's where your mommy and daddy are," they told me. I woke up periodically and looked out the window to make sure the house was still there. The next morning I was ecstatic, bounding down the stairs for breakfast. I had done it; I had spent the night away from home. As a reward, my friend's mom fixed waffles and I ate three. When I asked for another, she tried to dissuade me. "Don't you think you've had enough?" I shook my head. If I could spend the night away from home, I could

surely eat four waffles. So she gave me another one and three bites into it I vomited all over the kitchen table.

I returned my gaze to my old house. I looked at it for a long time, trying to work up the courage to knock on the door. I wondered who lived there. I looked down at my attire: old shorts so loose they needed a safety pin to hold them up (and it's worth noting that no sharp object can rightfully be called "safe" when existing in close proximity to such a sensitive area of the body). I was wearing an old City Stages shirt that had been washed so many times it now read, "Cit ages." I'd been sweating all day, so my face was oily. I did not look trustworthy, and my beard wasn't helping matters, either. I rehearsed what I was going to say, how to ask politely if they'd allow me to look inside, how to portray myself as exactly the opposite of a serial killer. I wanted to see inside, to verify my memories.

I knocked at the door, trying to remember what it had felt like to come running out of it, holding some toy that simply had to be played with immediately. Now the memories were coming easily, flooding my mind. I remembered so much. I remembered the inside of the house with its giant living room and attached kitchen. I remembered waiting there for my daddy to come home and how we would work ourselves into a ravenous hunger making funny faces at each other and listening to "Another One Rides the Bus" by "Weird" Al Yankovic and "Uptown Girl" by Billy Joel, my two favorite songs. I remembered when my brother, then a student at Highlands Day School, volunteered my mother to make dozens of costumes for the school play. The play had something to do with Robin Hood and I thought I might explode, such was my

excitement. I pleaded with her to make me a costume, which she did, finally, but not out of the forest-green material she had purchased for my brother and his classmates. Instead she made mine out of old curtain material, red with white dots. It didn't matter. I wore my Robin Hood tunic everyday for weeks, accessorizing it with a red football helmet, a belt, and something I called a "beasting stick," with which I "beasted" various objects.

I remembered the time I got the girl down the street to take her panties off and my mother found us, the poor girl lying face down on my bed, pale blue panties around her ankles. I remembered the time my father dressed up in a gorilla costume and leaped out from behind the door and I was so afraid I instantly wet my pants. I remembered waking up early Saturday morning to watch "The Smurfs" with my brother. I remembered being rushed to the hospital after tripping and slicing my head open on the corner of the brick fireplace. I remembered my mother saying, "It'll be okay, it'll be okay, I love you, I love you," as they rushed me to the emergency room. I remembered spending days with my parents, playing with my brother, exploring the neighborhood. I remembered feelings, smells, thoughts. Or at least I thought I did. It's hard to believe, in a sense, that all of those memories were of me, not of someone else, not scenes from a movie. They happened to me. A very different me, but me nonetheless.

After knocking for several minutes, I backed away slowly and headed to my car, driving home to open the package I'd picked up at the post office, and which had unintentionally led me into my past. But had I actually wanted this correction to my

memory? Had I really wanted to see how short the never-ending staircase I remembered actually was? How small the living room — then the size of a domed stadium — actually was? Maybe more than anything I would have liked to stand there in that room, inside the same walls, close my eyes hard and try to remember what it felt like to look up and see my brother, my parents, my toys, before everything else, before kissing and credit cards and before guilt far greater than that experienced after stealing a banana-flavored Popsicle. Memory tends to crumble, like shale, like the bones of now-extinct animals, but its dust collects, and imagination moistens it, reassembles it if you let your eyes relax, tune out your immediate surroundings, and remember, beautifully, imperfectly.

Susanna Childress

Prayer; or, God, Nearing Goalie

One night your sister lay in bed
 preparing herself for sleep, that slow spiral
 of consciousness, inward, perhaps,
 so the dream pooled at the stem of her brain

 began its delicate splay into a childhood memory
 which, this time, included flight. Perhaps, too,
 the premonition of wings wakened your sister
 seconds before a moth, fluttering blindly

 in her moonless room, dove
 straight into her ear. At the ER, her head
 on an examining table, the doctor's
 slight silver pincers extracting the thing

 still flapping in tenacious reflex, your sister
 could not, after such length in the keen knells
 of panic, tell the difference between
 the pulse in her ear and the moth's

 jockeying beat. Afterward—
 silence so bright it filled the dusty aperture of her ear
 like daybreak the corners of your
 Auntie's kitchen, linen-white, wick-white. Only once

 had the doctor treated a case more severe:

at dusk, the combined velocity of a girl
bearing down on the checkered spin
of a soccer ball and a junebug, zinging towards the heavens.

In Loving Memory

David Harrity, Poetry Editor



2008 - 2010

"Gone, but not forgotten."

Contributor Notes

SUSANNA CHILDRESS Susanna Childress' first book of poetry, *Jagged with Love*, was selected by Billy Collins for the 2005 Brittingham Prize. She is currently teaching as a Lilly Postdoctoral Fellow at Valparaíso University and has finished her second manuscript, *Entering the House of Awe*.

ROD DIXON is a father and husband who lives and writes in Louisville, Kentucky. His fiction has appeared in several different journals, most recently *The Red Rock Review*. He is a Teamster, regular attendee of the Louisville meeting of The Religious Society of Friends, and non-fiction editor of *Ontologica*. He also writes occasionally on his blog, [Spare the Rod](#).

COLLEEN S. HARRIS was a 2010 Pushcart Prize nominee. Her first book of poems, *God in my Throat: The Lilith Poems*, was published by Bellowing Ark Press in 2009. Her second and third books of poetry, *These Terrible Sacraments* and *Gonesongs*, are forthcoming in 2011. Her work has appeared in *Adirondack Review*, *Wisconsin Review*, *Sow's Ear Poetry Review*, *The Louisville Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Appalachian Heritage* and many others. She holds an M.F.A in Writing and an M.S. in Library & Information Science.

JEFFREY M. HOPKINS graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with a B.A. in Philosophy in 2003. He enlisted in the United States Army in 2004 and has deployed to Iraq three times. He writes fiction and poetry. His first novel, *Broken Under Interrogation*, was self published in 2008. His second novel is due out in the fall.

KILEAN KENNEDY was born and raised in Kentucky. His fiction has appeared in such fine places *Barrelhouse*, *The Louisville Review*, *The Wrong Tree Review*, *Hobart* (web), *Word Riot*, and *The Mississippi Review Online*.

JOSH MAKOWSKI Josh Makowski, AKA "Gentle", is a tattooer, painter, writer, and tattoo machine builder. He has been tattooing professionally since 1998. Born and raised in Erie, Pennsylvania he currently works at and owns Karma Tattoo Studio. He opened Karma in August of 2006 in downtown Erie, but is currently in the process of relocating. Karma will have its grand re-opening at the new location, 4428 Peach St., Erie, PA 16509 on August 1st, 2010. For custom tattooing he can be reached at 814-461-0000. For other inquiries, his email is gentleone444@gmail.com. More of his work can be viewed via myspace.com/gentlejoshuamakowski or www.facebook.com/greatwaveirons.

LOREEN NIEWENHUIS holds a Master of Science degree from Wayne State University and a Master of Fine Arts from Spalding University. Her fiction has appeared in many journals including *The Antioch Review* and *The Bellevue Literary Review*. Her collection of short stories, *Scar Tissue*, was a finalist in the 2009 Flannery O'Connor Award for Short Fiction. She recently went in search of adventure and completed a 1,000-mile walk around Lake Michigan. This publication includes an excerpt from the book about her journey. Here is the blog of her adventure: LakeTrek.Blogspot.com

JOHN SEAY had it made. While living in Birmingham, Alabama he worked as a music journalist and freelance writer for a variety of publications, and as a tour manager for a handful of bands you may have heard of. Then, following his dream of becoming a super-famous writer, he enrolled in a brief-residency creative writing program at Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky. But after only one semester of writing, he foolishly dropped out to attend law school at the University of Georgia. Three years and a mountain of debt later, he has finally emerged as a putative lawyer focusing on environmental, entertainment, and intellectual property law. He now lives and works in Atlanta, Georgia, where in secret he enjoys the new life he has chosen for himself, far removed as it sometimes seems from the world of music and literature. However, in an effort to keep one foot firmly rooted in the artistic life he used to know, he now

represents musicians and writers and — let's face it — anyone who will pay him to sue somebody. He enjoys watching sports and interacting with the kinds of people who refer to "skulls" as "skeleton heads." Contact him at jeseay80@gmail.com.

JOSH SMITH is an adult educator and instructional designer by day. At night, he studies martial arts, eastern philosophy, jewelry craft, leather craft, and wire work.

SCOTT WALKER co-founded Brain Candy, LLC in 2008 to formally explore new opportunities in commercial entertainment properties. Through Brain Candy, LLC, Scott has been able to bring together his personal passions (technology, writing, and the science fiction and fantasy genres), his academic background (B.A.s in English and Religious Studies and an M.B.A.), and his business experience (Brain Candy, LLC is Scott's second startup; he sold his first in 2009). In reality, though, Scott is just another monkey who thinks he can type (and he often confuses typing with writing).